

VEL
NE

jeevadhara

PROCESSED

JUL 13 1995

GTU LIBRARY

INDIAN INTERPRETATIONS OF THE BIBLE

Edited by

George M. Soares-Prabhu

ISSN 0970-1125

Vol. XXV No. 146

jeevadhara

A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

Indian Interpretations of the Bible

Edited by

George M. Soares-Prabhu

Jeevadhara

Kottayam - 686 041

Kerala, India

Tel. (91) (481) 597430

Vol. XXV No. 146

March 1995

JEEVADHARA

is published every month
alternately in English and Malayalam

GENERAL EDITOR

Joseph Constantine Manalel

SECTION EDITORS

The Human Problem

Felix Wilfred

C. Thomas Abraham

The Word of God

George Soares-Prabhu

Mathew Variamattom

The Living Christ

Samuel Rayan

Jose Panthackal

The People of God

Kuncheria Pathil

George Karakunnel

The Meeting of Religions

John B. Chethimattam

Thomas Manninezhath

The Fulness of Life

Thomas Srampickal

Mathew Paikada

Manager: Jose Pollayil

SECTIONAL BOARD OF EDITORS

K. Luke

J. M. Pathrapankal

Lucien Legrand

George Koonthanam

George Kaniarakath

Mathew Vellanickal

George Mangatt

K. V. Mathew

Lucius Nereparambil

EDITOR - BOOK REVIEW

J. B. Chethimattam

CONTENTS

	Page
Editorial	100
The Way to the Kingdom of God	
A Semiotic Reading of a Markan Pericope (Mk 10: 2-16)	105
<i>Joseph Pathrapankal</i>	
The Authority of Jesus	
A Dalit Reading of Mk 11 :27-33	123
<i>A Maria Arul Raja</i>	
Seeking God, Sought by God	
A Dhvani-Reading of the Episode of Zacchaeus (Luke 19: 10)	139
<i>R. J. Raja</i>	
The Kairos of the Galilaioi	
An Indian Liberationist Reading of John 1-7	149
<i>Simon Samuel</i>	
Divinisation Through Grace	
Understanding a Johannine Theme in the Light of Saiva-Siddhanta	161
<i>Corona Mary</i>	
Book Review	173
<i>J. B. Chethimattam</i>	

Editorial

The quest for an Indian interpretation of the Bible is a recent one. It could emerge as a coherent and academically respectable movement only with the decline of historical criticism, which, till about twenty five years ago, was the only method of biblical exegesis permitted in the academy. Historical criticism blossomed in Europe in the 16th-17th centuries, as part of the paradigm shift which ushered in the modern world. This shift was the result of three inter-related movements: the Reformation which broke the stranglehold of Church dogma on the intellectual life of Europe; the Renaissance which put the new intellectuals in touch with an alternative Classical culture, from within which it was possible to critique the mediaeval world; and the Enlightenment which introduced a new understanding of the world based not on faith but on reason. The Age of Faith, in which tradition was the primary norm for thought and action ("what is good enough for my father is good enough for me") gave way to the Age of Reason, with reason now the primary norm ("unless I see I will not believe"). This allowed the appearance of the 'natural sciences', whose spectacular success led the 'human sciences' to develop critical methods which sought to emulate its rationality and precision. Just as alchemy was replaced by chemistry, so too traditional history (an unsorted mix of fact and fiction) made way for critical history which sought to describe things exactly as they happened; and the traditional study of literature (which accepted without question the traditional authorship of documents) gave place to the critical literary studies in which the authenticity and integrity of texts was rigourously examined. Historical criticism attempted to apply these critical methods for the study of history and of literature to the Bible.¹

Although at first resisted by believing Christians who saw in such critical study an attack on the Word of God, the critical study of the Bible was eventually recognized and accepted by main line Christianity — though not until the mid-twentieth century by the Roman Catholic Church.² It is still suspect among fundamentalists

1 George Soares-Prabhu, "The Historical Critical Method: Reflections on its Relevance for the Study of the Gospels in India today", in M. Amaladoss, G. Gispert Sauch and T. K. John (ed.), *Theologizing in India* (Bangalore: TPI, 1981) 314-67 [314-15].

2 Ibid.

who believe that the Word of God is immune to criticism, but in Christian academic circles (though not always among the 'faithful') it has become the standard method, indeed the only academically respectable method of biblical interpretation.

As long as historical criticism remained the standard method of interpreting the Bible there could be no question of an 'Indian' interpretation. For historical criticism claims to be a 'scientific' method, one which (like science itself) is value free and culturally neutral. It admits no culture-specific variants, but is always everywhere the same. There can be no 'Indian exegesis' any more than there can be an 'Indian' mathematics or an 'Indian' physics.³

There is of course a fallacy in this view of historical criticism. Because it is a human science not a natural science dealing with 'words' (historically conditioned expressions of human experiences) not with 'terms' (univocal, steno-symbols for measurable quantifiable realities) historical criticism can never aspire to the 'neutrality' or exactness or global uniformity of 'science'. Its neutrality is illusory. Preunderstandings and pre-options enter into the historical study of texts, so that even the most rigorous attempts at historical criticism are ideologically loaded—all the more dangerously because the ideology is repressed.⁴

This fallacy becomes increasingly evident as the new cultural climate of post-modernism replaces the totalizing rationality of the modern age. Post-modernism is much too elusive and amorphous a world-view to define⁵, but its basic attitude is one of suspicion of totalizing explanations which pretend to offer a complete explanation of a world, and a rejection of the positivism which pretends that there is a 'scientific' realm of 'objective' perception, freed from all interpretation.⁶ Instead of a single objective expla-

3 George Soares-Prabhu, 'Interpreting the Bible in India Today', *The Way Supplement*, 72 (Autumn 1991) 70-80 [70-71].

4 Soares-Prabhu (n. 1 above) 318-20.

5 Robert Fowler, 'Postmodern Biblical Criticism', *Forum* 5: 3 (1989) 3-30 (3-4). The article gives a long list of indices contrasting the modern and the post modern taken from Ihab Hassan, *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Post-modern Theory and Culture* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987) 91-94; but, like Hassan, refuses to hazard a definition as to what 'post modern' might mean.

6 David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper, 1987) 47. 7 Ibid., 48.

nation of reality, postmodernism prefers a pluralism of interpretations in which "reality is constituted by the interaction between a text, whether book or world, and a questioning interpreter".⁷

In such a postmodern world historical criticism ceases to be the sole or even the dominant academic method of biblical exegesis.⁸ Instead, the focus of biblical interpretation shifts from an author-oriented historical criticism to a text-based literary criticism; and from literary criticism to reader-response criticism and intertextuality.⁹ In the sixties, historical criticism which looked for the meaning of the text in its author meaning (what the author intended to say) was challenged by the text immanent synchronic methods of structuralism and literary criticism, which sought the meaning of a text in the structures (deep or surface) of the text itself, abstracting from its history. More recently, methods of reader response criticism, which pay more attention to the role of reader in the production of the meaning of a text, have begun to appear. The spotlight today is on the reader of the text.¹⁰ For, as Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has said, "one's social location or rhetorical context is decisive of how one sees the world, constructs reality or interprets biblical texts."¹¹

This shift in literary criticism from author through text to reader is paralleled by developments in philosophical hermeneutics. The interpretation of a text is now envisaged not as the recovery of an original author meaning embedded in the codes of a text, from where it can be dug up through the controlled use of neutral methods, but as the production of meaning which takes place in

8 Gary Philips "Exegesis as Critical Praxis: Reclaiming History and Text from a Postmodern Perspective", *Semeia* 51 (1990) 7-49. Philips notes how "the peaceful days of exegesis understood as a straightforward, disinterested philological exercise are long past, the fantasy has been dispelled that historical exegesis is neither theoretical nor ideological. Non-theoretical non-ideological exegesis has never existed except as a romantic construct itself an ideological imposition on the way exegetes were taught to represent themselves what it is they said and did" [12].

9 For a more detailed survey see George Soares-Prabhu, "Two Mission Commands: an Interpretation of Mt 28:16-20 in the Light of a Buddhist Text", *Biblical Interpretation* 3 (1994) 264-82 (262-69).

10 See Robert Fowler, "Who is the Reader in Reader — Response Criticism", *Semeia* 31 (1985) 5-26; Bernard Lategan, "Coming to Grips with the Reader" *Semeia* 48 (1989) 3-17.

11 Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, "The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship", *JBL* 107 (1988) 3-17 (5).

the creative interaction of interpreter and text. This interaction has been likened by Hans Georg Gadamer to a conversation between 'I' of the interpreter and the 'thou' of the text, in which, as in any genuine dialogue, each is open to the other.¹² The text responds to the reader's concerns and the reader reacts to the claims of the text.

The openness of the text to the reader is the result of what Paul Ricoeur calls its **semantic autonomy**.¹³ This means that a text by the fact of its being codified as a text, acquires (like a child that is born) a life of its own. It is now cut off from and will survive its author, the circumstances in which it was written, and the original readers to whom it was addressed. Its meaning, therefore, does not depend on what the author intended to say, nor by what its original readers may have understood it to have meant. It is determined by what the text itself means, through its linguistic structures and codes. And because language is polysemic the autonomous text (no longer determined by what the author intended to say) will have a **surplus of meaning**. Its linguistic structure will house an indefinite number of potential meanings that will be progressively actualized each time it is exposed to new set of references or read by a new interpreter.

Both philosophical hermeneutics and postmodern biblical criticism thus converge in emphasizing the importance of the reader in the interpretation of the text. This of course does not eliminate the text, making it a Rorschach blot inviting the subjective projection of the reader. The text has its own inner consistency within which any interpretation must function. Not any meaning can be read from any text. And if the text is open to the concerns of the interpreter the interpreter too (whatever his preunderstanding) must remain open to the claims of the text.

Meaning thus emerges in the interaction of reader with the text. And it is in this model of reading that Indian interpretations of the Bible find a legitimate place. The Indian exegete is no longer tied to the one true method of biblical exegesis (the historical critical method) which pursues the one true meaning of the biblical text (the author meaning) by bracketing out the concerns

12 Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975) 321-24.

13 Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976) 29-37.

of the interpreter, and pretending to be a universally valid "scientific" method, without cultural particularity or denominational bias. Rather she or he is invited to read the Bible with an Indian pre-understanding, inspired by Indian concerns drawing on the life experience and exegetical traditions of Indian culture(s).

This can be done in many ways. I suggest four of these as an illustrative, not an exhaustive list. An Indian reading of the Bible might mean any one of the following:

1) Reading the biblical text using traditional Indian methods of interpretation (like *dhvani*) — if indeed these have anything to add (and I am not sure they do) to the immense repertoire of exegetical techniques available in the world of biblical exegesis today.

2) Reading the Bible in the light of specifically Indian concerns (like poverty or caste).

3) Reading the Bible with an Indian mind, that is, with the sensibilities of the great or little traditions of India (like a vedantic reading of John or a tribal reading of the Exodus).

4) Reading a biblical text along with a parallel text from an Indian Scripture — not to compare their respective religious world-views, but to gain new insights into the biblical text from its similarity to or difference from its inter-text.

The first three of these suggestions have been worked out in the articles that appear in this issue of *Jeevadhara*, which offers *dhvani* (Pathrapankal, Raja), *dalit* (Arul Raja, Samuel) and *Saiva-Siddhantic* (Corona Mary) readings. The fourth has been attempted elsewhere in an experimental article of mine that looks for new insights into the so-called 'Great Commission' of Mt 28: 16-20 by reading it in the light of the mission command of the Buddha in Mahavagga 11.1 of the Vinaya texts.¹⁴

It is to be hoped that these attempts at an Indian interpretation of the Bible will provoke many others. For Indian interpretations of the Bible, whether one thinks interpretations using Indian interpretative techniques, or of readings guided by sensibilities shaped by an Indian culture, or (most importantly) of interpretations provoked by questions which emerge from the Indian situation, are still all too few. Much excellent work is being done to judge from the many biblical dissertations with a distinctly Indian orientation that have begun to appear. But too much of our exegesis in India today is still, I feel, engaged in pursuing an irrelevant and often illusory agenda of "scientific research", dictated by the brahmins of yesterday West

¹⁴ See n. 9 above.

The Way to the Kingdom of God

A Semiotic Reading of a Markan Pericope (Mk 10: 2-16)

A rewarding approach to a synchronic reading of the Bible is semiotic analysis which takes the text as it lies before the reader in its final stage and focuses on its kerygmatic elements. This method, which is close to the *dhvani* reading of a text proposed in Indian poetics, is here applied to a Markan pericope (Mk 10: 2-6) placed at the beginning of his 'Travel Narrative'. This pericope contains three units describing respectively the attitudes of (1) the sophisticated Pharisees (10: 2-9); (2) the disciples, characterized by their inability to understand the 'inner meaning' of what Jesus teaches (10: 10-12); and (3) the little children brought by their mothers to be blessed by Jesus, who are shown to be paradigms for those who are ready to accept the gift of the Kingdom with openness and sincerity (10: 13-16). Read in this way the Markan pericope brings to light basic differences in the understanding of religious values, both doctrinal and ethical, between Jesus and the Pharisees; and indicates the hard 'way of the Kingdom of God' which the disciples of Jesus are invited to follow.

One of the major shift of emphases in contemporary interpretation of the Bible is the gradual abandoning of the historical-critical method and its exclusive preoccupation with the *Sitz im Leben* of the community as the decisive factor in the interpretation of the Bible. In its place we are witnessing the growing attention paid to the context of the reader and the interpreter of the biblical text and thereby the evolving new meanings and challenges confronting the reader and his/her community. There is a general feeling that till now the historical-critical method has done a good job by demonstrating that the Bible is the word of God in human language, thereby making the Bible appear in its divine as well as human dimensions. Equally important for the interpreter today is how to make this divine and human dimensions applicable and relevant to the people of our times. The interpreter meaning is not exclusively controlled by the principles of historical criticism; but it is assumed that the new meanings the interpreter discovers are

in tune with the principles of literary criticism, especially when it is the question of interpreting the Gospels. The shift of emphasis is from the diachronic to the synchronic approach of understanding of the biblical text.

During the past few decades several methods of interpreting the Bible have been developed and the Pontifical Biblical Commission has recently published a very substantial and useful document critically evaluating these methods and giving a balanced view about the merits and demerits of these approaches to biblical interpretation.¹ This document has clearly shown that biblical interpretation in our times is no more an easy academic exercise and that it demands constant and thorough updating to make it meaningful and relevant. The meaning of a biblical text can be fully grasped only if it is actualised in the life of the interpreter who has to share it with his/her faith community in order to enrich it. Whereas historical-critical method maintained that a biblical text can have only one meaning, the theories of language and of philosophical hermeneutics have established that the written texts are open to a plurality of meaning.² Catholic exegesis does not claim any particular scientific method as its own. It recognises the basic fact that the biblical texts are the work of human authors, who employed both their own capacities for expression and the means which their age and social context put at their disposal. Addressing men and women, from the beginnings of the Old Testament onward, God made use of all the possibilities of human language, while at the same time accepting that his word be subject to the constraints caused by the limitations of this human reality. Consequently, Catholic exegesis freely makes use of the scientific methods and approaches which allow a better grasp of the meaning of texts in their linguistic, literary, socio-cultural, religious and historical contexts, while explaining them as well through studying their sources and attending to the personality of each author.³

A very important and rewarding approach of the reader dimension of biblical text is known as *semiotic analysis* which

1 *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993).

2 Cf. "Interpretation of the Word: God's Word, the human word and the interpreter's word" in *Text and Context in Biblical Interpretation* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1993) 1-16.

3 Cf. *Interpretation of the Bible* 85.

tries to concentrate on the study of the biblical text as it comes before the reader in its final state. This method takes as its starting-point the fact that each biblical text is a coherent whole, obedient to a precise linguistic mechanism of operation. Moreover, in this approach the various characters and personalities take on new meanings beyond their historical roles in so far as they become signs and symbols for the reader and the interpreter. This is particularly true of the Gospels because here we come across several characters who show traits and behavioural patterns which have also a symbolic meaning, and consequently they present themselves as models who have either positive or negative influence on the readers of our times. Redaction criticism has convincingly demonstrated the theological insights of the four evangelists who have worked out their specific theologies into the narrative structure of their Gospels in such a way that the readers today are invited to see for themselves the message of the stories and sayings in these Gospels from a new theological focus. Moreover, according to the hermeneutical thought of Paul Ricoeur, the meaning of a text has to be actualised in the lives of the readers who appropriate it. Beginning with their situation, they are summoned to uncover new meanings, along the fundamental line of meaning indicated by the text. Biblical knowledge should not stop short at the language; it must seek to arrive at the reality and the inner meaning, of which the language speaks. The religious language of the Bible is a symbolic language which gives rise to thought, a language the full richness of which one never ceases to discover, a language which points to a transcendent reality and which, at the same time, awakens human beings to the deepest dimensions of personal existence.⁴

That is why a semiotic analysis is particularly appropriate way to arrive at the meaning of a Gospel text. Its appropriateness for us is heightened by the fact that the method (as I shall show below) comes quite close to the Indian method of *dhvani*. In the kind of semiotic reading we propose, modern and Indian readings in a sense meet.

The passage we are going to analyse from a semiotic perspective is a cluster of three smaller stories in the Gospel of Mark (Mk 10: 2-16) placed at the very beginning of the Travel Narrative

4 Ibid., 75.

(Mk 10: 1-52). Although the Travel Narrative, as such, is a specific contribution of theology of Luke (Lk 9: 51-19: 27), it is to be noted that the literary framework of this journey theme as a prelude to the climactic stage of the Christ event in the passion and resurrection narrative in Jerusalem is the original contribution of Mark, who has given the basic literary and biographic structure for the Synoptic Gospels. Consequently, the theological significance of this otherwise short Travel Narrative of Mark cannot be underestimated. It shows how the disciples of Jesus have to follow him on the way to Jerusalem with a new determination, and this seems to be the inner meaning of the last verse of Mark's Travel Narrative, where it is said that Bartimaeus, the blind man cured by Jesus and given a new awareness of his identity on the basis of his encounter with Jesus of Nazareth, "followed him on the way" (Mk 10: 52), here understood as the way to Jerusalem, the place where Jesus will have to suffer and die before he will rise to a new life. The disciples of Jesus have also to follow him on the same way.

The Background of the Marcan Pericope (Mk 10: 2-16)

The Marcan Travel narrative mentioned above comes towards the end of specific section of Marcan theology of discipleship (Mk 8: 27-10: 52) in which the readers are introduced to the mystery of the suffering Son of Man and consequently discipleship also is seen in the context of suffering. The self-revelation of the Son of Man to the inner group of the disciples of Jesus as destined to suffering and death before he rises from the dead (Mk 8: 27-32a) created resistance from the disciples represented by Peter and this occasioned the first official teaching of Jesus about discipleship as a call to suffering and renunciation (Mk 8: 34-38). The basic structure of this prediction of the passion followed by two others (Mk 9: 31; 10: 32-34) is that the prediction by Jesus is immediately followed by a misunderstanding by the disciples, which necessitated the teaching of Jesus about the radical demands of discipleship. In fact, the beginning of the Marcan section on the mystery of the Son of Man (8: 27-10: 52) is preceded by a strong reproof of the disciples about their lack of understanding the meaning of discipleship even after they had been with Jesus for a long time: "Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do

you have ears, and fail to hear? ... Do you not yet understand?" (Mk 8: 17-21). This criticism of the disciples is followed by the story of the cure of a blind man at Bethsaida (Mk 8: 22-26), in which the blind man is gradually brought to have the full sight, a story which symbolically anticipates the whole process of the opening of the inner eyes of the disciples to understand the mystery and meaning of discipleship.

It is against the background of these developments in the understanding of discipleship that we now try to see the semiotic perspectives of Mk 10: 2-16 consisting of a series of smaller incidents in which Jesus is presented as confronting different categories of people with their specific attitudes to the central message of Jesus about the kingdom of God and consequently to the kind of discipleship Jesus expected from them. Though Mark does not dwell on the real teaching of Jesus as much as Matthew and Luke, it is a literary style of Mark to present Jesus time and again as a teacher. Hence the Travel Narrative of Mark also begins with a statement that Jesus was teaching the crowds, "as was his custom" (10: 1). The smaller stories which follow this introductory statement, which we are going to analyse below, are all to be seen within the perspective of this teaching in so far as Jesus is thereby explaining to his hearers the basic qualities and dispositions expected of them if they want to become his true followers and disciples fit for the kingdom of God.

Mk 10: 2-16 consists of three smaller pericopes: (a) Jesus and the Pharisees (10: 2-9), (b) Jesus and his disciples (10: 10-12) and (c) Jesus, his disciples and the infants brought to him by the people (10: 13-16). In fact, here we have three representative groups with their own characteristic attitudes to the Good News preached by Jesus. If the Pharisees represent a sophisticated group, the disciples are characterised by their inability to understand the inner meaning of what Jesus teaches, and the third group of infants and mothers invites the hearers to understand the need of becoming children in order to enter the kingdom of God. The stories as they are now presented in the Gospel of Mark in the context of his Travel Narrative semiotically explain and contrast the qualities of Jesus' hearers and his would-be disciples, inviting them to follow the example of the last group of children, who are ready to accept the gift of the kingdom with openness and

sincerity, although they initially get a feeling of rejection from the less understanding disciples of Jesus.

a) *The Sophisticated Pharisees (Mk 10: 2-9)*: The story begins with some of the Pharisees coming and asking Jesus a question in order to test (*peirazontes*) him. The testing by the Satan (Mk 1: 13) to which he had to subject himself before he began his Galilean ministry was to continue in different forms during his earthly ministry, and here we have a typical case when one has apparently to contradict himself if the Torah was to be interpreted correctly. The question of divorce was a burning question, a crux of rabbinic discussion, and the Pharisees wanted to invite Jesus also to this discussion to force him to take sides with one or the other interpretation. It could be that on another occasion Jesus had said something about divorce with a kind of leaning towards a milder interpretation, as is the case in Mt 5: 31-32, and now the Pharisees wanted to see whether Jesus was consistent or not. It may be that they knew what he would answer and thereby they thought they could involve him in permanent enmity with Herod who had divorced his^s wife and had married Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. It could also be that they wanted to hear Jesus contradict the written law of Moses, and thereby to formulate a charge of heresy against him.

The Jews held marriage and chastity in high esteem. The ideal was that every Jew must surrender his/her life rather than commit idolatry, murder or adultery. But the basic fact was that divorce, which naturally resulted in adultery was a very common phenomenon in Judaism. The underlying fact was that in Jewish law a woman was regarded as a thing. She had no legal rights at all. She was at the mercy of the male head of the family. The result was that a man could divorce his wife on almost any ground, while there were only very few grounds for which a woman could seek divorce. The law of Jewish divorce goes back to Dt 24: 1 and this passage was the foundation and the crux of the whole matter. It read: "Suppose a man enters into marriage with a woman, but she does not please him because he finds something objectionable about her, and so he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of the house; she then leaves his house and goes off to become another man's wife." The real crux of the problem was the interpretation of this law.

What is meant by the statement "something objectionable"? There were two schools of thought, the school of Shammai and the school of Hillel. The former interpreted the matter with utter strictness and accordingly "something objectionable" was only adultery committed by the wife. The other school interpreted that crucial phrase widely and concluded that any little objectionable thing was enough to constitute the reason for a divorce. Human nature being as it is, it was the laxer view which prevailed and the result was that divorce was a very common thing in Judaism and as a result women hesitated to get married for fear of divorce.

Such being the situation in Judaism, the question raised by the Pharisees had to be answered by Jesus. It was a question meant for diagnosing the mind of Jesus, whether he agreed with the school of Shammai or the school of Hillel. Since the question was an involved one, Jesus did not answer it and raised a counter question: "What did Moses command you?" and he knew very well that he would be facing a precarious situation when Moses' teaching was introduced. Only so could he proceed to the root of the matter, explaining to them what God wanted at the beginning of creation. And Jesus explained to them the reason for this unusual permission as related to their "hardness of heart". The implied idea is that Moses laid it down more as a preventive and restrictive law to reduce divorce to the minimum than as a positive and encouraging law. Moreover, it was an interim law and hence Jesus went back to the very source of every law, namely, God and his basic plans about the humankind. According to Jesus in the very nature of things marriage was a permanent reality which indissolubly united two people into one, in such a way that the bond could never be broken by any human law and regulation, and hence the Mosaic regulation about divorce was a temporary arrangement. The inner message of what Jesus said was that the loose sexual morality of his society must be mended. Those who sought marriage only for pleasure are reminded that marriage is also a responsibility and that there is a spiritual unity implied in it. Whereas the Pharisees wanted to remain at the level of the letter of the law, Jesus tried to raise the issue to the level of personal relationship and responsibility. For him what mattered was not legal sophistication and juridical arguments but personal concern and regard for God's ultimate plans. In fact, the very reality of the kingdom of God which Jesus preached was a going back to

the original plan of God according to which the whole human community is a large family of inter-related persons. The Pharisees through their intriguing questions tried to stand outside of this divine plan and they wanted to take refuge in the transitory regulations and thereby escape the demands of the message of Jesus. As on many other occasions, the Pharisees proved that they with their legalism and casuistry are the least prepared for entering the kingdom of God.

From a semiotic perspective we see that there is now also a considerable number of these sophisticated christians for whom temporary and transitory rules and regulations are more important than the basic human and gospel values. Casuistry and sophistication can mar the beauty of christian life and the charm of the Good News preached by Jesus. We have in the church people who think that they have the keys of interpreting the gospel in terms of orthodoxy and orthopraxy and who claim to have the criteria of judging between good and bad, relevant and irrelevant. This happens in the fields of theology, spirituality, ethics and liturgy with ever-increasing sharpness and antagonism, and one often wonders ultimately what we all are aiming at. Many seem to forget a very simple and at the same time profound principle Jesus established for the future of any meaningful religion and religious traditions: "The sabbath is made for humankind, not humankind for the sabbath" (Mk 2: 27). In other words, persons are more important than laws which regulate human relationship. Emphasising the absoluteness of law as more important than the sanctity and the inviolable nature of the human person is precisely the opposite of what Jesus preached and tried to establish in the society of his times and of all times. Even as the so-called vanguards of orthodoxy and orthopraxy try to safeguard the truth of the gospel, they forget the basic fact that very often it is their own selfishness and idiosyncrasy that are projected and it takes time for the people to understand the anomaly and the awkwardness of this subjectivism defended and litigated through the exercise of authority and the adherence to tradition.

Luke in his Gospel has presented two such characters, the Pharisee in the temple (Lk 19: 9-14) and the elder son in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, probably also a Pharisee (Lk 15: 25-32), who through their legalism and consequent disrespect for others stand out as examples of pride and presumption, and

condemn others as worthless and useless. On the one hand, they are quite sure of their being the righteous persons and models for others and, on the other hand, they despise others and attribute to them vices which they may not have committed at all. Thus the elder son in the Parable attributes to his younger brother the sin of spending money with prostitutes (Lk 15:30), which according to the parable was only "squandering money in dissolute living" (Lk 15:13). Wherefrom did the elder brother get this close information that his younger brother lived with prostitutes? It was his nasty mind and probably his own innate desire to have an experience of such a life if only he had a chance! The parable itself makes it clear that the elder son had his own strong desires for enjoying life. That is why he told his father: "For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends" (Lk 15:29). The major problem was that he did not live like a son at home, but rather as a slave; consequently he did not have the freedom of a son towards the father and so he suppressed even his legitimate desire of having a get-together with his friends and continued his stay at his father's residence, never enjoying the real life at home and having wild and cruel imaginations about the drawback of others!

The Pharisee in the Temple (Lk 18:9-14) is the embodiment of this mentality and the introduction to this parable is significant: 'Jesus told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt' (Lk 18:9). In other words, it is a parable for all those who have the basic tendency of self-aggrandizement which is the starting-point of the habit of despising others. Though it is said that the Pharisee went to the temple to pray, it was not for praying, rather it was for praising, praising himself and for giving God a report of his excellence over others. According to him, whatever he did was virtue and holiness, whatever others did was sinful. He was not like others, and that is important! Hence he can have a place near to God! But the judgement of Jesus is just the opposite. The tax-collector in the temple, who confessed that he was a sinner, is the one who went home with God's approval and blessing. The sophisticated and self-righteous Pharisee is rejected by God because his attitude to the kingdom of God is legalistic and not

personalistic, his understanding of religion is ritualistic and not based on sound ethical values.

b) *The Ignorant and the Simple Disciples (Mk 10: 10-12)*: Over against the sophisticated Pharisees with their obstinate attitude to Jesus and to the kingdom of God we try to see the simple disciples of Jesus who even after their being with him for a long time are not able to understand the simple doctrine Jesus gave about the sacredness and indissolubility of marriage as something willed and planned by God. They were like that from the very beginning. After Jesus spoke to the crowds about the kingdom of God and illustrated it through the parable of the sower (Mk 4: 1-9) the disciples, when they were alone with Jesus, asked him about the meaning of the parables and Jesus explained it to them (Mk 4: 10-20). After the feeding of the five thousand (Mk 8: 1-10), when the Pharisees tried to test Jesus and demand a sign from him, Jesus told the disciples: "Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod" (Mk 8: 15) and the disciples could not understand it that Jesus was speaking about the false teaching of the Pharisees (cf. Mt 16: 12). The story of the transfiguration is followed by an incident about the healing of a boy possessed by an evil spirit, in which the disciples could not succeed, and so Jesus had to do it with his divine power (Mk 9: 14-27). When the disciples were alone with Jesus, they asked him: "Why could we not cast it out?" and Jesus answered them: "This kind can come out only through prayer" (Mk 9: 28-29).

If we analyse the background of these disciples, we come to realise that they revealed in their various life situations what they really were. They were all called from very simple backgrounds. Most of them were belonging to the fisherfolk, and this also accounts for the promptness of their response to the call of Jesus (Mk 1: 16-20; Mt 4: 18-22; Lk 5: 1-11). What Paul wrote to the Corinthians about their background and call is equally applicable to the first disciples of Jesus: "Consider your own call: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast

in the presence of God" (1 Cor 1:26-30). In fact, in the Johannine logion Jesus also thanked the Father for the gift of these simple and unsophisticated people to be his disciples, for having hidden the mysteries of the kingdom from the wise and the understanding and revealing them to the babes (Mt 11:25-26; Lk 11:21). They were simple and sincere enough to return to Jesus and report to him that all what they could do, when they were sent out to preach the gospel and heal the sick, was due to the power given to them by Jesus (Lk 10:17-20).

However, the very same disciples were children of their times; they were ambitious and preoccupied about their glory and position; they had their worldly expectations in their following Jesus. Once Peter spoke up: "Look, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?" (Mt 19:27). Logically the question should have been: "We have left everything and followed you. Tell us what we have to do for you now." The community discourse in Matthew (Mt 18:1-35) begins with a strange question raised by the disciples to Jesus: "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (Mt 18:1). The second prediction of the passion is followed by a story in Mark according to which in the very context of Jesus speaking about his suffering and death, the disciples were arguing about who was the greatest among them" (Mk 9:33-35; Lk 9:46). It seems Luke was aware of the basic inability of the disciples to understand the mystery of a suffering Son of Man, and so he introduces the prediction of the second passion in these words: "Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is to be delivered into human hands" (Lk 9:44), and the reaction of the disciples was that they did not understand this saying; "its meaning was concealed from them... and they were afraid to ask him about this saying" (Lk 9:45). Mark also hints at the basic inability of the disciples to understand the mystery of Jesus when he writes about Jesus' journey to Jerusalem: "They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; they were amazed, and those followed were afraid" (Mk 10:32). The same ambition and craziness about greatness followed into the scene of the Lord's Supper where the disciples are presented as engaged in a dispute as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest (cf. Lk 22:24) and Jesus had to present himself as their servant (Lk 22:27).

With all these human limitations and their consequent adverse effects on the personality of the disciples, they were still simple and humble, sincere and dependent, aware of their limitations and amenable to reason. They would never enter into a dispute with Jesus; they would never try to test him and demand another sign from him to prove his divine authority. Peter, the leader of the Twelve, would object to Jesus having to suffer and die (Mk 8: 32); he would even go to the extent of denying Jesus three times (Mk 14: 66-71). But then he broke down and wept (Mk 14: 72). It is to this Peter, who was fully aware of his limitations, that Jesus entrusted his sheep and lambs to feed and take care of (Jn 21: 15-17), because ultimately it is these simple and sincere people who would prove more prepared to receive the blessings of the kingdom of God. Hence Jesus takes the initiative to rehabilitate a wounded and broken Peter to remind all his future disciples that what he counts most is the love and sincerity of his disciples. In fact, Jesus is more pleased with the converted and committed prodigal son than with the elder son; he is more appreciative of the humility and sincerity of the publican in the temple than the pride and presumption of the Pharisee. Jesus is ready to go to the house of Zacchaeus and stay with him (Lk 19: 1-10) because he realised that this tax-collector would effect a radical transformation of his life after his encounter with him.

c) *Jesus, his Disciples and the Little Children (Mk 10: 13-16)*: In the third incident we have a variety of peoples: Jesus, his disciples, and the children as well as the mothers who brought these children to Jesus. Though Jesus had women disciples who were helping and supporting him and his immediate disciples (Lk 8: 1-2), in this story it is all about his male disciples who spoke sternly to the mothers who brought the children to Jesus. They with their ambition for name and fame would not consider it befitting the status of their Master to spend his time on trivialities. It is the mothers who brought the children to Jesus. Even though Judaism was a male-dominated society, as is the church of our times, only the mothers would carry the children for such things as getting blessings from an itinerant preacher. They were as helpless and marginalised as the children they were carrying in their arms and they could be conveniently disregarded by the male disciples! The two miracles of the

multiplication of the loaves in Matthew end with a statement about the number of people who ate the bread: "Those who ate were five (four) thousand men, besides women and children" (Mt 14: 21; 15: 38). In the eyes of the sophisticated male society during Jesus' time the women and the children were non-persons, non-entities. The disciples of Jesus also shared the same view and before Jesus could reach out to these helpless mothers and their children they were already chased away by the disciples. How else could they prove themselves to be the children of their times?

The reaction of Jesus was spontaneous. Mark is wont to reveal the humanity of Jesus with its limitations and tiredness. Jesus would, due to fatigue, sleep on a cushion in a fishermen's boat and, when woken up, rebuke the storm in the sea (Mk 4:38-39). On a sabbath he would go to a synagogue and, seeing a crippled person, would ask the assembled people whether it was lawful to do good and save life on a sabbath or not. Having looked at their hardness of heart and cruel silence, he would be grieved and angry and tell the crippled person to stretch out his hand and would heal him (Mk 3: 1-6). The same kind of indignation Jesus had when he realised that his own disciples had sent off the mothers with their children. Even as the Jewish society of Jesus' time marginalised and discriminated against women and children, Jesus would welcome them as more suited to the kingdom of God. Jesus said: "Let little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it" (Mk 10: 14-15). Jesus stood for values; his prophetic stance on religious and social issues was strong and at the same time uncompromising. In fact, to a great extent, the established marginalisation of these women and children in the secular society was the sure sign of their being closer to the kingdom of God. This positive and encouraging attitude of Jesus to the children is described by Mark: "He took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them" (Mk 10: 16). Only Matthew and Mark speak about Jesus laying his hands on the children and Mark adds something of his own when he says that Jesus "took them up in his hands, laid his hands on them and blessed them". Jesus was not a puritan, nor was he a prude.

In the Synoptic Gospels children are models; they have a significant place in the teaching of Jesus. The second prediction of the passion in Mark and Luke is followed by a dispute among the disciples about who is the greatest among them and Jesus taught them about true greatness by bringing a child into their midst and showing them the basic meaning of greatness as based on the qualities and characteristics of children (Mk 9: 33-36; Lk 9: 46-48). The community discourse in Matthew (Mt 18: 1-35) with its demands from the leaders of the community is also introduced with the radical demands of Jesus about the leaders assuming the qualities of children as the basic requirements to become authentic leaders (Mt 18: 1-5). In the course of this discourse Jesus refers to the entire community under the care of these leaders as "little ones" (Mt 18: 6), thereby meaning that he considers the entire community of his followers as having the qualities of children, such as sincerity, humility, a sense of dependence, and an unsophisticated character. Hence Jesus tells his disciples that the children are the best suited to belong to the kingdom of God, a quality which he wanted his disciples also to cultivate in their value systems and interpersonal relationships.

Jesus started his Galilean ministry with a call extended to all to be converted (*metanoete*)⁵ and committed (*pisteuete*) in the context of the nearness of the kingdom of God (Mk 1: 14-15). In the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5: 1-7: 29) Jesus proposed the demands and dimensions of this new *dharma*.⁶ The sum and substance of what Jesus has to say about the new *dharma* is that the kingdom of God demands a better and deeper *dharma*, a *dharma* which is better than that of the scribes and the Pharisees (Mt 5: 20). The Jewish teachers and Pharisees had their own thinking and value systems about religion and virtues, about right and wrong, about lawful and unlawful. But Jesus did not always

5 The English translation of the Greek *metanoete* as "repent" is quite inadequate — Cf. J. Pathrapankal, *Metanoia Faith Covenant: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1971) 47-52.

6 The translation of the Greek *dikaioyne* as "righteousness does not bring out the profound meaning it has in the teaching of Jesus. The earlier translation as "justice" was even more inadequate. It seems that the Sanskrit word *dharma* is the most appropriate one to translate the Greek *dikaioyne* — cf. J. Pathrapankal, *Christian Life: New Testament Perspectives* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1982) 35-48.

subscribe to these views. The difference of outlook on religion and religious values constituted the major block between Jesus and Judaism. The many controversial stories found throughout the Gospels illustrate this point. We have a number of stories in the Synoptic Gospels where the Scribes, Pharisees and the Sadducees approach Jesus with intriguing questions in order to test him. So also we have several healing miracles reported in the Gospels which took place on the sabbath, and it could be argued that the sabbath was chosen for these cures in order to test these legalistic leaders. The long controversial discussion in Mk 7:21 clearly shows where Jesus and the Pharisees had their point of departure in the understanding of religion.

The Marcan pericope we have been analysing brings to light the basic difference in the understanding of religious values, both doctrinal and ethical, between Jesus and Pharisees. What Jesus had been teaching throughout his earthly ministry about following him and belonging to the kingdom of God receives a new emphasis and a new focus in the passage which is placed at the very beginning of Mark's Travel Narrative of Jesus going to Jerusalem to face the ultimate challenge from the same Jewish leaders. He is on the way to Jerusalem to realise for himself the destiny of his mission and to establish for his followers the basic principles which should guide them in their journey to the goal of their life. What they need is not sophistication and casuistry; what they have to look for is not ways and means of satisfying their own selfishness, as it happened in the case of sending away for trivial reasons one's own partner in life for the simple reason that Moses allowed it (Dt 24:1). There are values more basic than these and similar ones. The conversion which Jesus demanded from his followers is a commitment to the values Jesus established as the hallmark of discipleship.

The disciples of Jesus, though simple and sincere were, also children of their times and it is reflected in their reactions to various issues, right from the beginning of Jesus' ministry. They were in need of being taught because they had to come out of their ignorance and inbuilt selfishness, and our present story is a clear example of how, on the one hand, they needed instruction about the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage and, on the other hand, they had to be admonished about their wrong

priorities about the values of belonging to the kingdom of God, which they revealed in their rebuking the simple mothers who brought their children to Jesus to be touched by him. At the same time, these ignorant and teachable disciples are far better than the proud and complacent Pharisees who were "locking the people out of the kingdom of heaven because they did not themselves go in, and when others are going in, they stopped them" (Mt 23: 13). "To receive the kingdom as a little child" is always a demanding step and Jesus would have shown an easier way if that were available. Hence he said: "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Mt 7: 13).

Semiotics and Dhvani

The *semiotic* reading we have proposed in this study with its emphasis on the synchronic and kerygmatic dimension of the word of God seems to come very close to the Indian theory of *dhvani*, proposed first by Anandavardhana in the 9th century of the Christian era. The theory as such is based on aesthetics and is more applicable to poetic composition, so much so that *dhvani* is said to be the soul of poetry. This theory presupposes a philosophy of language based on a principle that the meaning of a word or a sentence depends on contextual factors, and that, at times, what is meant might be different from what is expressed by individual words. This we may call the suggested meaning, as different from the primary or secondary meaning of a word or a sentence. This suggested meaning is the result of intuition and not speculation. It is a meaning through evocation, a depth meaning which can be better experienced, but not adequately expressed.⁷ This suggested meaning can be sometimes more prominent than the primary meaning and it is all conditioned by the reaction and the response of the reader and the interpreter to the text. It is to be noted that *dhvani* is not the product of imagination. Imagination can sometimes combine and associate anything with anything through the use of fancy, however it is

7 Cf. Anand Amaladas, "Dhvani theory in Sanskrit Poetics". *Bible Bhashyam* 5 (1979) 261-75; Francis X. D'Sa, "Dhvani as a Method of Interpretation", *Ibid.* 276-94; Pathrapankal, *op. cit.*, 10-16.

arbitrary. But *Dhvani* is the further articulation of the primary meaning. No amount of philological analysis can lay bare the *dhvani* effect if the reader and the interpreter do not have a special quality that attunes him/her to this *dhvani* dimension.

In the strict sense of the word *dhvani* reading is an exercise of arriving at the depth meaning of a passage through the expressed primary or secondary meanings and consequently, the former is not opposed to the latter, rather it complements the latter. Hence it functions without denying any of the primary or secondary meanings and its presence can be more prominent than any direct meaning. Therefore it can happen that when the *dhvani* meaning is at work, the other meanings, though present, can recede into the background. This is not to deny the direct primary meaning, but rather to transcend it to a new realm of reflection and application. It is entering into a new atmosphere of intuition. When it is a question of articulating the *dhvani* meaning of a religious text, it is a process of entering into communion with the realm of the divine where the text unravels and unfolds the invisible and bring them to clearer light. What is necessary to reach this dimension of *dhvani* is to have the capacity to live in that realm by the values divine.

This is precisely the case when we are dealing with a biblical text. The Bible is the end product of the faith exercise of the communities of Israel and the early church. The writers of the various books of the Bible acted as the representatives of these faith communities, and their concern it was to articulate the faith of the community they were representing, at the same time making use of their own thinking patterns and literary skills. It can happen that an interpreter of the Bible today analyses a biblical text in such a way that it takes on new *dhvani* meanings which were not clearly articulated in the text but, at the same time, evolves out the text in the context of the specific theological orientation of a particular writer of a biblical book. In the same way as the biblical writer did his work as a representative of his faith community, the interpreter of the Bible today has to dwell on this text to see whether it has a deeper message to give to the readers of his times. This is particularly true of the Gospels which are kerygmatic history, where historical events are narrated with their

kerygmatic purpose. It is a question of actualising the text, making the text speak more than the words mean by themselves. The evocation of such depth meanings makes the text more relevant and meaningful, and thanks to this meaning evolved through evocation, the text meaning becomes enriched and enriching. This is what we have tried to do in this semiotic reading of a crucial text in the Gospel of Mark, who, as the inventor of the literary form "gospel", enjoys a special place in the New Testament literature.

Dharmaram College
Bangalore, 560 029

Joseph Pathrapankal

The Authority of Jesus

A Dalit Reading of Mk 11: 27-33

A close reading of Mk 11: 27-33 in the context of the Gospel discloses its meaning for Mark's community, whence we can derive its meaningfulness for dalit Christians today. The text illustrates the opposition between the charismatic authority of Jesus ('from heaven') and the institutional authority of the Jewish leaders ('from humankind') which runs right through the Gospel, resulting in an on-going conflict which leads to the death of Jesus, turned by the resurrection into his ultimate triumph. This conflict between the God-given authority of Jesus and the institutional authority of the Jewish leaders is a paradigm of the conflict going on in many parts of India today between dalit movements fighting for justice in the Church and the institutional Church leaders who oppose them. Properly understood, Mk 11: 27-33 has therefore lessons for the dalits, their leaders, those who wish to collaborate with them, and the anti-dalit institutional authorities who oppose them.

We often observe that institutional authority and charismatic authority are in conflict with one another. The former seeks to establish law, order, permanence, stability, routine or social control, with its norms, laws, structures or traditions. On the other hand, charismatic authority, with its unique nature, ventures into radical questioning of the basic presuppositions and traditions of the established institutions, and points out to new orientations.¹ This conflict between institutional authority and charismatic authority is found in the Gospel narratives of the mission of Jesus. We come across many Gospel passages in which the official Jewish authorities, representing institutional authority, confront the charismatic Jesus with questions about his identity and mission (Mk 2: 1-3; 6; 11: 27-33; 12: 13-34). As a result of such conflict Jesus is crucified and killed (Mk 3: 6; 11: 18).

A similar situation of conflict prevails today, when the legitimate voice of dissent from us, the dalits, is opposed by the institu-

1 Max Weber, *Essays in Sociology*. ed. H. H. Gerths and C. W. Miller (New York: OUP, 2 1975) 245-52.

tional authority of the Church to sideline our legitimate demands.² The need of the hour for us, then, is to understand the source and the inner strength of our own authority, as it confronts the repressive authority of the institutional Church, in order to usher in the Reign of God in which injustice finds no place. To do this we must reflect on the charismatic authority of Jesus, which we see as a paradigm for our own. A proper perception of his authority — of its source, nature, mode of functioning and implications — will lead us, hopefully, to new insights into the nature of our own authority, and so inspire us in our struggle against the institutional authority operating against us in so many ways.

The authority of Jesus is disclosed with particular clarity in Mk 11: 27-33, a text in which Jesus is expressly questioned about his authority by the institutional authorities of his time. Here the conflict between charismatic and institutional authority becomes explicit. Indeed the word *exousia* (the Greek word for 'authority') is found in this passage four out of the ten times it occurs in Mark. A careful study of this text will therefore throw light on the nature and origins of the authority of Jesus and hence of our own. We shall study the text, then, by 1) analysing it carefully, 2) determining its meaning for the Markan community, and 3) drawing conclusions about its meaningfulness for us dalits today.

1. An Analysis of Mk 11: 27-33

Mk 11: 27-33 is a controversy story with a characteristic controversy form. Jesus engages in a polemic dialogue with the Jewish leaders in the Temple (v 27), the site of the violent and much resented protest action he had undertaken the day before (11: 15-19). In this hostile setting the dialogue follows a question-answer pattern which centres on the reaction of the Jewish leaders to the counter question of Jesus (vv 31-32). The carefully constructed concentric structure of the polemic dialogue appears clearly when the text is laid out as follows:

Mk 11: 27-33

O. Hostile Setting

- 27 Again they came to Jerusalem. As he was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to him and said,

2 A. Raj "The Dalit Christian Reality in Tamilnadu", *Jeevadhara* 22/128 (1992) 93-111.

A. Question (v. 28)

- 28 "By what *authority* are you doing these things?
Who gave you this *authority* to do them?"

B. Counter Question (vv. 29-30)

- 29 Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question;
answer me,
and I will tell you by what *authority* I do these things.
- 30 John's baptism, was it from heaven (from God),
or was it from humankind?
Answer me."

C. Reaction to the Counter Question (vv. 31-32)

- 31 They argued with one another,
"If we say, 'From heaven', he will say,
'Why then did you not believe him?'
- 32 But shall we say, 'from humankind'? — they were
afraid of the crowd,
for all regarded John as truly a prophet.

B'. Reply to the Counter Question (v. 33a)

- 33 So they answered Jesus, "We do not know."

A'. Concluding Reply to Question (v. 33b)

And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you
by what *authority* I am doing these things."

If the question (v. 28) introduces the topic under discussion (authority), the counter-question of Jesus with its double emphatic "answer me" (vv. 29-30) is an implicit anticipation of the ultimate answer. But it is the reaction to the counter-question (vv. 31-32) which is obviously the focus of the whole concentric arrangement of the text. In this editorial comment the question at issue is the opposition between "from heaven" (*ex ouranou*) — where "heaven" is a rabbinic circumlocution for 'God'³ — and "from humankind" (*ex anthrōpōn*), with their corresponding attitudes of "believing" (*pisteuein*) and "being afraid" (*phobeisthai*), respectively. A strong adversative *alla* ('but') separates the two opposed options so that the dialogue brings out the diametrically opposed orientations of the two sets of 'authority' at play. The structure of this opposition can be indicated as follows:

3 H. Traub, art. "Ouranos", in *TDNT*, v. 509.

ITEMS	INSTITUTION	alla	CHARISM
<i>Persons</i>	Chief Priests, Scribes, Elders	C	Jesus, John, crowd, all
<i>Foundation</i>	Jerusalem Temple	O N	authority
<i>Origin</i>	from humankind	F	from heaven
<i>Attitude</i>	fear, consultation,	L	faith, doing
<i>Response</i>	'We do not know'	I C	'Neither will I tell you'
<i>Situation</i>	ongoing ignorance "We do not know" – i. e. We go on not knowing Cf. the present tense of the Greek verb	T	continuing action "I do these things" – i.e. I continue to do... Cf. the present tense of the Greek verb

The table shows how diametrically opposed are the orientations of institution and of charism. It makes the following points:

1) The personnel of the institution have official designations, while those on the other side are ordinary people.

2) The institution rests on glorious human structures; charism depends solely on God-given authority.

3) Too many managerial skills are operative in the institution: consultation, fearing public opinion; charism is busy with the works that are to be done while facing opposition.

4) Diplomatic evasion is the approach of the institution; while a decisive refusal to bow down to the pressures of the institutional authorities is characteristic of charism.

5) There is an escape from commitment in the institution, there is an ongoing commitment to action in charism.

In the light of the analysis made above, Mk 11:27-33 can be read as follows. The Temple-based Jerusalem authorities, representing the religious, legal and political institutions of their people have determined to put a definite end to the mission of the lay person Jesus, once and for all (11:18). Their unwillingness to acknowledge the divine authority of his ministry brings them all (chief priests, scribes, elders) together as a group to confront Jesus (11:27). But it is God who has empowered Jesus to proceed with his mission with a unique kind of authority, and

not any human institution (v. 29-30). The same God authorized John as the true eschatological prophet, who with his baptism and mission stood as a fore-runner of Jesus.

While the common people readily believed John and thus Jesus, the hard-hearted Jewish leaders defiantly refused to do so. Because these leaders fear public opinion (11: 18; 11: 32; 12: 12) and look for mutual support among themselves they base their authority on human institutions. But they are accountable to the authority of Jesus (note the double emphatic "answer me" in vv. 29-30); while Jesus is not bound by their questions (note how in v. 33 the Jewish leaders "answer" [*apokrithein*] Jesus, while Jesus in v. 29 does not "answer" but merely "speaks" [*legein*] to them). Come what may, Jesus' activities in pursuit of the Reign of God will go on forever unimpeded ("I do [go on doing] these things... " in v. 33).⁴

2. The Meaning of Mk 11: 27-33 for the Markan Community

What would Mk 11: 27-33 and the opposition between institution and charism which it brings out so emphatically have meant for the community for which Mark wrote his gospel? This becomes clear when we understand the passage in the light of 1) its immediate context and then 2) of its setting in the Gospel of Mark as a whole.

2.1. Mk 11: 27-33 in its Immediate Context

The immediate context of Mk 11: 27-33 is formed by the pericope on the Lesson from the Withered Fig Tree (11: 20-25) which precedes it and the parable of the Tenants (12: 1-12) which follows. The first of these is the second part of the episode of the cursing of the fig tree (11: 12-14). Mark has intercalated the cleansing of the Temple (11: 15-19) between the two parts of the Fig Tree episode so as to serve as the key to the theological purpose of the sandwich arrangement.

4 This summary is based on a detailed exegesis of the text, for which the reader is referred to the author's M. Th. dissertation, *The Authority of Jesus: a Redaction Critical Exploration into Mk 11: 27-33 from a Dalit Perspective*, (Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, 1994) 22-39.

The Immediate Context of Mk 11: 27-33

The cursing of the Fig Tree (11: 12-14)

The cleansing of the Temple (11: 15-19)

The Lesson from the Withered Tree (11: 20-25)

The Authority of Jesus (11: 27-33)

The Parable of the Tenants (12: 1-12)

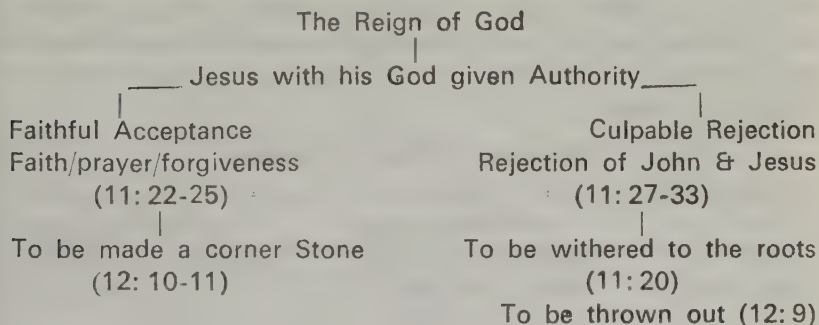
Because of the intercalation of the cleansing of the temple into the story, the cursing of the fig tree and its result (the withering away to its roots) is shown to be a symbolic expression of God's impending judgment upon unfaithful Israel. Jesus' prophetic cleansing of and teaching in the temple are therefore to be understood as the warning of God's judgment breaking the backbone of the religio-legal institutionalism, which does not bring forth fruits of righteousness.⁵

Against this background of the irruption of God's Reign, the need for unshakeable faith in and on-going prayer to the Father in heaven is underlined in 11: 22-25. The concrete way of participating in the reconciliatory measures of the Father is to forgive others along with praying (11: 25). These are, in fact, concrete realizations of the imperative of the inaugural proclamation of Jesus: "repent and believe in the good news" because "the time is fulfilled and the Reign of God has come near" (1: 15).

The spirit of welcoming the God's Reign by accepting Jesus' authority with an open mind and heart is not found in the Jerusalem authorities (11: 27-33). Their rejection of Jesus is referred to in the parable that follows (12: 1-12). They (the tenants of the parable) have rejected the prophets, John the Baptist among them (the servants of the parable) sent to them by God (the owner of the vineyard in the parable), and finally kill Jesus (the beloved son, the heir of the parable) (12: 1-8). But God continues to operate in a wonderful way (12: 9-11). Yet, even as they listen to the parable the unrepentant Jewish leaders are bent on arresting Jesus (12: 12).

5 W. L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (NICNT) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 400; H. Anderson, *The Gospel According to Mark* [NCB] (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) 263-67.

In this context (11:20-12:12) the message of our text can therefore be summarised as follows:



We see from the above that the rejection of the charismatic authority (of Jesus) by the institutional authority (of the Temple-based officials) implies:

- 1) the rejection of the unveiling of the Reign of God;
- 2) further intensification of the judgment of God;
- 3) a sharp contrast with the openness of those ('disciples', 'believers', 'crowds', 'all', 'others') who are exhorted to turn towards God through prayer, forgiveness and faith, and are to be made the corner-stones of God's Reign.

2.2. Mk 11:27-33 in the Context of Mark

The crux of the problem discussed in 11:27-33 is whether the authority of Jesus is from God. This Christological concern falls in line with the over-all christological intention of the whole Gospel. Mark's purpose is to correct a false Christology (of glory) and teach a true Christology (of suffering), with its consequences for Christian discipleship.⁶

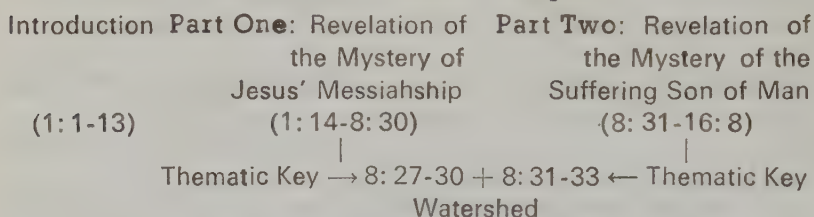
The pivotal text in both the literary and theological development of Mark is clearly Mk 8:27-30, or better 8:27-33. This "water-shed" of the gospel narrative⁷ offers a link between the

6 T. J. Weeden, "The Heresy that Necessitated Mark's Gospel", in W. Telford (ed.), *The Interpretation of Mark* (London: SPCK, 1983) 64-77. Weeden develops his thesis in greater detail in his *Mark: Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971). See also R. H. Gundry, *Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 1026.

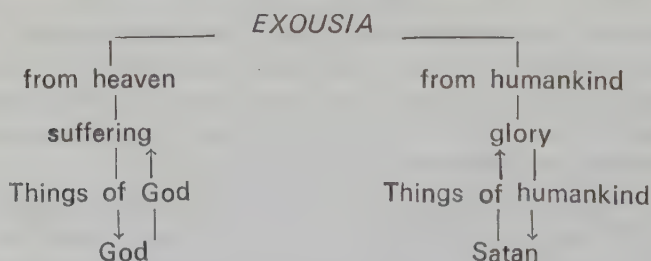
7 The pivotal character of Mk 8:27-30 is widely recognized – See R. H. Lightfoot *The Gospel Message of Mark* (London: OUP, 1962) 34-35; Q. Quesnell, *The*

two parts into which most authors divide the gospel: a first part (1: 14-8: 26) which by describing the progressive revelation of Jesus' Messiahship seeks to answer the question "who is Jesus?"; and a second part (8: 31-16: 8) which by revealing the mystery of the Suffering Son of Man answers the question "what sort of Messiah is Jesus?"⁸

Structure of Mark's Gospel



If the answer to the first question ("you are the Messiah") is clearly given in 8: 27-30, the answer to the second ("the Son of Man must suffer") is equally explicit in 8: 31-33. Here, then (in 8: 27-33), the two parts of the gospel meet; and we find that just at this point of creative fusion, the opposition between "from heaven" and "from men", so basic to 11: 27-33, is illuminated by the opposition between "the things of God" (*ta tou theou*) and "the things of men" (*ta tou anthrōpou*). Our understanding of the two kinds of *exousia* described in our text now gets a new dimension which can be set down as follows:



Mind of Mark [AnBib 38] (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1969) 126-38; H. C. Kee, *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977) 57; J. P. Heil, *Jesus Walking on the Sea* [AnBib 87] (Rome: Biblical Institute 1984) 130; S. Kuthirakkattel, *The Beginnings of Jesus' Ministry According to Mark's Gospel (1: 4-3: 6): A Redaction Critical Study* [AnBib 123] (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1990) 37.

⁸ See Kuthirakkattel (n. 6 above) 37-60 for a detailed and convincing analysis of the structure of Mark.

This means that the *exousia* of the Markan Jesus is understood as the empowerment from God to do the things of God, for which facing suffering and death is an essential requirement (8: 31-33; 9: 31-32; 10: 33-34). The sharp rebuke addressed to the misunderstanding Peter not to opt for the 'things of humankind' is an invitation to the Markan community to fall in line with the way of suffering of Jesus, who does 'the things of God' with God-given authority.

Further, for Mark, the *exousia* of Jesus, given 'from heaven' can be understood only in faith. This is shown by his arrangement of the divine and human declarations of Jesus' identity at key points in his gospel. We thus have:

Faith Confession	Divine Revelation
1: 1 "Jesus Christ the Son of God — by the Evangelist at the beginning of the Gospel	1: 11 "You are my Son, the Beloved" F — by the Father when the heavens are torn apart and the <i>Spirit</i> descends on him A
8: 29 "You are the Messiah" — by Peter at the watershed of gospel	I 9: 7 "This is my Son, the Beloved" T — by the Father from the cloud
15: 39 "Truly this man was the Son of God. — by the gentile centurion at the Cross	H 14: 62 "I am" (the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One ... the Son of Man, seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven — by Jesus at his trial

Clearly, then, for Mark, Jesus' authority rests on what happened to him when John baptized him, that is, when the Spirit came down upon him and the Father affirmed him (1: 10-11). It is confirmed at the Transfiguration (9: 7) and at the scene of his trial (14: 62). That is why Jesus refers to the baptism of John when queried about the origin of his authority to do his messianic deeds.⁹

9 J. Jeremias *New Testament Theology*, Volume I (London: SCM, 1971) 55-56.

This authority will be understood only through faith, which the Temple-based authorities do not have, nor want to have, but which the evangelist (1: 1), Peter (8: 29) and the gentile centurion (15: 39) do.

2.3. Cumulative Meaning Effect of Mk 11: 27-33

It is clear then from the analysis of Mk 11: 27-33 in itself and in its context in the gospel, that for Mark the *exousia* of Jesus functions in a particular way, while the authority of his adversaries, who represent the religious, theologico-legal and political institutions of his people operate in a wholly opposite way. This opposition (running throughout the gospel) can be conveniently summarised under the three headings of creed, code and cult as follows:

The Authority of Jesus The Authority of the Institution CREED

- | | |
|--|---|
| — Based on the experience of God as Abba/Father (1: 9-10) | — Based on human traditions, and institutions (7: 1-13) |
| — Spirit-inspired not Beelzebub-inspired (3: 23-27) | — Against the Spirit (3: 28-30)
Envy inspired (15: 10) |
| — Faith in the God of the living and in the Resurrection (12: 24-27) | — Faith in the God of the dead (12: 18-23) |
| — God's sovereignty a supreme reality (12: 13-17) | — Confusing God's sovereignty with Caesar's (12: 13-17) |

CODE

- | | |
|---|---|
| — Kingdom-oriented activities: healing, exorcism, forgiveness of sin, eating with sinners (1: 28-34; 2: 1-12; 2: 15-17) | — Obsession with legalism (2: 23-3: 6) |
| — Feasting/rejoicing about the Reign (2: 18-22) | — Fasting (2: 18) |
| — Absolutizing the absolute and relativizing the relative (7: 1-13) | — Absolutizing the relative and relativizing the absolute (7: 1-13) |
| — Radical understanding of the Law (2: 27; 10: 2-11) | — Superficial understanding of the Law (2: 24; 10: 2-11) |
| — Refusal to give wonderful signs (8: 11-13) | — Expectation of wonderful signs (8: 11-13) |

- Active solidarity with the common people (6: 34)
- New community transcending bonds of family (1: 16-20; 3: 13-19; 14: 22-25)
- Cheap popularity shunned (1: 44; 5: 43; 9: 9); but popular (1: 28; 1: 45; 6: 14; 1: 8-10), evoking amazement (1: 27; 5: 20)
- Rich interiority (1: 12-13, 35; 6: 31, 46; 14: 32-42)
- Ready to serve, and lay down life for others (10: 45)
- Courageous confrontations even at hostile centres of power (11: 15-19)
- Ready for suffering and death (8:31-33; 9:31-32; 10:33-34)
- Alienation from the common people (11: 18; 12: 12; 14: 2) and trying to manipulate them (15: 11)
- Same old association of office bearers and accomplices (8: 31; 11: 27; 14: 53)
- Craving for popularity yet unpopular (11: 18, 32; 12: 12; 14: 2)
- External pomp (12: 38-40)
- Desiring to lord it over others (10: 42)
- Cowardly plotting (3: 6; 11: 18; 12: 12; 14: 2)
- Seeking glory (12: 38-40)

CULT

- The 'New Temple' not made by human hands (14: 58f; 15: 38)
- God-given forms of Kingdom oriented worship through prophetic action (11: 15-17)
- Restoring the holiness of God's presence in the Temple (11: 15-17)
- The Temple as a house of prayer for all nations (11: 15-17)
- Radical obedience to the Love Command to love God and neighbour (12: 28-34)
- Towards Resurrection (8: 31; 9: 31; 10: 33; 16: 6)
- The 'Old Temple' made by human hands (14: 58f; 15: 38)
- Human structures and institutions of the Temple (13: 1-2)
- Polluting the holiness of God's presence in the Temple (11: 15-19)
- The Temple as a den of robbers, a base for an elite minority with vested interests (11: 15-17)
- Elaborate burnt offerings and sacrifices (12: 33)
- Towards destruction (13: 1-2; 15: 38)

Though this list does not pretend to be exhaustive, it is extensive enough to show how the features operative in the *exousia* of Jesus run counter to those operative in the authority of the religious, theologico-legal and political institutions which opposed him. And it allows us to sum up the cumulative meaning effect of Mk 11:27-33 on the Markan community as follows:

1) The authority of Jesus had its roots in his intense Abba-experience which came to him during his baptism by John. It is because of this experience that he began to proclaim the arrival of God's Reign (1: 9-15).

2) His proclamation of this good news took the form of solidarity with the common people who were suffering under oppressive forces. They responded to the on-going kingdom-oriented activities of Jesus with enthusiastic acceptance (1: 21-28, 40-45; 2: 1-7 ...).

3) The same proclamation of Jesus led to confrontation with the religio-legal and political institutions of his people, already deserving God's judgment for having gone against God's will. The officials of these institutions, because of their lack of faith and their hardness of heart were in continual conflict with Jesus' words and deeds (2: 1-3; 6; 3: 20-28; 7: 1-13; 12: 12-40).

4) This conflict, sharpened by the envy of the authorities over the acceptance of Jesus by the common people, led as it gained momentum to an on going plot to kill Jesus (3: 6; 11: 18; 12: 12; 14: 1-2). As a result of this Jesus was crucified and killed (15: 37).

5) John, the true prophet, who was the forerunner of Jesus, rightly acknowledged the authority of Jesus and participated in the mystery of the unveiling of God's Reign by proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (1: 4-5). He too was "delivered up" and martyred (1: 14; 6: 14-29).

6) The Markan community struggling with confusion, calamity and persecution (13: 5-31) is expected to be vigilant in faith and prayer (11: 23-25). It is invited to recognize the authority of Jesus in faith in order to participate in the unveiling of God's Reign through the words and deeds of Jesus (8: 38). But, eventually the community too will be "delivered up" to the institutional

authorities (13: 9), like John the forerunner (1: 14) and Jesus the good news (9: 31; 10: 33; 14: 10f, 41f; 15: 1, 15).

7) But the unveiling of God's Reign does not stop with the death of Jesus. It is the 'Old Temple' which is destroyed, and the 'New Temple' which is built up by his death (13: 2). This has been anticipated during his ministry in the cleansing of the Temple (11: 15-17), with its symbolic explanation given in the incident of the unfruitful fig tree, cursed and made to wither (11: 12-14, 20-21).

8) Against this background of the martyrdom of John in the past and its own present and future martyrdom that the community of Mark is invited to take heart by reflecting on the death and the resurrection of the true Son of God, Jesus (15: 37-39; 16: 6-8). It will understand then that the unveiling of God's Reign cannot be impeded. The good news will be preached to all nations (13: 9).

9) The process will be consummated at the Parousia, when Jesus, the Son of Man, will come in power and glory to perfect the eschatological community. It is against the background of this eschatological hope that the Markan community is invited by the Evangelist to acknowledge the singular authority of Jesus.

3. The Meaningfulness of Mk 11: 27-33 for us Today

Our reading of Mk 11: 27-33 suggests, then, the following elements which may be of help to us in evolving a spirituality for dalit liberation in the context of the serious conflict between dalits and the church authorities which is going on in various parts of the country today.

1) Jesus is aware of and actively acknowledges through his Kingdom oriented activities the charismatic authority associated with his Sonship which comes to him 'from heaven'.

2) This God-given authority of Jesus assumes a double mode: solidarity with the vulnerable masses suffering under the oppression of evil forces; and confrontation against the hardened institutional structures which do not promote the Reign of God.

3) The vehement opposition of the institutional authorities to the God given authority of Jesus results in his death.

4) The irruption of the God's Reign does not end with the death of Jesus, because the God-given authority of Jesus cannot be over-ruled by the structures that are trying to bind the hand of God.

5) Those who, like John, acknowledge in faith the authority of Jesus from the perspective of God's reign unveiling itself, participate in the mission of Jesus. They too will be 'handed over' to the institutional authorities like Jesus and John.

These elements allow us to find a message in our text for 1) the dalits; 2) the dalit leaders; 3) collaborators with the dalits; and 4) the anti-dalit institutional authorities.

4.1 The Dalits

Like Jesus who acknowledged his God-given authority and whole-heartedly plunged into Kingdom-oriented activities, we, the dalits, are challenged to acknowledge our dalitness as both a God-given privilege as well as a human situation of persecution. As with Jesus, this acknowledgment of dalitness has to assume the form of confrontation against the hardened institutional structures claiming to promote law, order, holiness and peace, while all the while they are protecting the lords of casteism and the patrons of the status quo. The same acknowledgment of dalitness is to assume the form of solidarity with all the victims of institutional authority who are denied their rightful claims.

These twin dimensions of confrontation and solidarity may cause us to be thrown outside the city gates, with threats of 'anathema sit'. The unjust edicts of the present day Sanhedrins, working in close collaboration with the recent day Pilates, will often be neatly executed against legitimate dalit aspirations.

It is here that we are challenged to evolve a spirituality of dalit liberation as a spirituality of confrontation. The Jesus-event continually reminds us that rootedness in God and in the authority which God gives is ultimate. It is this rootedness through faith in a God who gave us the privilege to be born dalits at this historical juncture of history that impels us to obey God and God alone, and does not allow us to bend the knee before insolent might.

4.2. Dalit Leaders

It is unfortunate that the leadership among the dalits is a matter of serious concern. Scattered and divided, we, the dalits,

are looking for a credible leadership. But too often our leaders are subsumed into the institution which buys them with attractive incentives. We need to evolve a liberative symbol to inspire us in our struggles. The Babasaheb Ambedkar, perhaps, serves this purpose best at the moment. But what about a living symbol of liberation? We still grope in the dark.

We look forward to dalit leaders of the stature of Jesus who with his God-given authority is a dynamic paradigm for dalit leadership. Such leaders, because they are deeply aware that their God-given authority comes through their dalitness, will be sensitive to the anguish of their co-dalits. Their rootedness in Kingdom-oriented activities, like that of Jesus, will express itself in the form of solidarity with the victims of sinful structures. Barren slogans, feigning to be prophetic, will not help in the unveiling of God's Reign. Rather a down-to-earth solidarity with their dehumanized dalit brethren, battered and disowned, will be the élan that will keep them going unimpeded in the face of trials and temptations. Glory will not be their lot. The Cross will be the gift violently meted out to them. Yet because of their rootedness in the God-given authority of their dalitness, they will find the inner strength to lead the dalit Exodus towards an integral liberation.

4.3. Collaborators with Dalits

Some non-dalits are ready to cast in their lots with the dalits for true liberation. They whole-heartedly join us in our struggles. Already in our country there are hopeful signs of collaboration between dalits and the backward classes for fighting common enemies. Such collaborators perceive the significance of dalitness with all the historical implications and eschatological hopes attached to it—and work with the dalits struggling towards liberation envisaged by God.

John the Baptist comes across as the model of such collaboration. He did not glorify himself but prepared the way for the 'Coming One'. Announcing the good news and denouncing the wrong ways of Herod and others, he participated in the unveiling of God's Reign.

Similarly the non-dalits collaborating with us are invited to apply themselves whole heartedly to the liberation of the dalits, without looking for their own interests. This collaboration of non-dalits and dalits may provoke the wrath of institution, so that both

may be 'delivered up' to their courts, like John and Jesus. But such martyrdom, which will literally result in the mixing of our blood, will ensure that a new brotherhood is built upon this earth.

4.4. Anti-Dalit Institutional authorities

All the structures and institutions trying to silence the voice of dissent of the dalits are thoroughly challenged by our text. Because the God-given authority of the dalits, irrupting now in the form of the dalit movements that are emerging all over India, is being side-lined in the life of the Church and of society, that authority is forced to confront the sinful structures and institutions perpetuating their anti-dalit hegemony.

And if the authorities still cling to the veneration of the idols of casteist hegemony and the worship of Mammon, then God's judgment will fall upon them with renewed vigour through the just wrath of the dalits. A thorough *metanoia* melting hardness of hearts will alone prepare the Church to receive the good news of the definitive arrival of the Reign of God, through the voice of the dalits organized into liberative movements.

These movements may be dismissed by the institutional authorities with arrogance or even put down with repressive measures. We, the dalits, may be crucified even on the altar of the Church. But this will not be the end of the story.

Empowered by God with our dalitness (as Jesus was with his *exousia*) and actively collaborating with all those who (like John) proclaim the irruption of God's Reign, we shall emerge as a new force treading the long road to freedom. Like the divinely vindicated Son of Man, we will rise. To destroy the institutions that dehumanize us, we shall arise again and again. For 'the time is fulfilled and the Reign of God has truly come near' (1:15).

Arul Gram, Koman Nagar
 Thaiyur P. O.
 Chengai — MGR Dist. 603 103

A. Maria Arul Raja

Seeking God, Sought by God

A Dhvani-Reading of the Episode of Zacchaeus (Luke 19: 10)

To a sensitive reader there is in any reading of a text (specially a literary text) an evocation of some meaning beyond that which is explicitly stated. A *dhvani* reading, based on the theory of *dhvani* or resonance developed by traditional Indian poetics, is one which is attentive to this evoked significance of a text, rather than to its literal meaning. Through a *dhvani* reading of the story of Zacchaeus in Lk 19: 1-10 the article brings out its great evocative richness. The story, which finds echoes in many parts of the Gospel, is the story of the seeker after God who is sought by God. It invites us to seek God in order to be sought by the God who has entered into our lives to seek and to save.

Introduction

Besides conveying something directly on a cursory level of meaning, language always echoes, elicits, evokes and provokes something beyond its primary, literary and matter of fact reading. To a sensitive reader there is always, in any reading, an evocative hint or allusion besides and beyond what is explicitly stated. He/she is able to fathom in what took place, a something that is going on besides what took place. He/she is able to experience a depth dimension of reality, a new perception of things, persons, events etc., beyond the ordinary. For such a reader the richness of the significance of the reading becomes more important than its primary literary meaning since the evocative potential which is contained in the reading adds to the aesthetic joy he/she derives from that reading and for that matter it also unfolds the inherent capacity of the text to be polyvalent in all its variegated richness. The method by which the evoked significance of a piece of literature is made to be prominent while the primary meaning is kept at a subordinate level, is called by the name *dhvani*.

As a hermeneutic principle *dhvani* has not been much of a favourite among Indian Christian biblical scholars in their interpretation of the Bible. Incipient efforts have been made, but not with

much of a camp-following.¹ There is perhaps a lurking fear that this method may lead to a wild, uncontrolled and even manipulative reading of the text according to the fertility of imagination, and the flight of fancy with which the interpreter is gifted.

But first and foremost the *dhvani* method does not dispense with what we have gained by way of a reasonably accurate understanding of the text through form critical studies, historical, literary or source criticism etc., but goes beyond it to a deeper perception of the text in all its aesthetic richness and implicit nuances. Secondly, an alert and sensitive reader may always use his hermeneutic maturity as a control mechanism to distinguish between his over-enthusiasm for the text and the inherent potential and newer insights which the text itself can offer.

The following study is a small attempt to vibrate with the episode of Zacchaeus in all its depth dimension from a *dhvani* point of view.

Seeking to Find

The episode of Zacchaeus is "a beautiful example of the triumph of the forgiving grace of God in the action of Jesus"² and is a fitting introduction to the passion and death of Jesus who came "to seek and to save the lost" (Lk 19:10). In spite of arguments to the contrary, namely that it is an ideal scene,³ most scholars are of opinion that there is much to be said in favour of its "historical reliability and vital genuineness".⁴

1 To my knowledge there has been just one issue of *Bible Bhashyam* (4: 5, December 1979) which has brought together a few scholars to contribute to a volume on the meaning of *dhvani* and its concrete applicability to biblical hermeneutics. Cf. also A. Amaladas, "Dhvani Method of Interpretation and Biblical Hermeneutics", *Indian Theological Studies* 31 (1993) 199-21; *idem*. "Dhvani Theory and the Interpretation of Scriptures", *Adyar Bulletin* 54 (1990) 68-98.

2 N. Geldenhuys, *The Gospel of Luke*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1977, p. 469. In the very name of Zaccheus there is symbolism. It means "clean" and it already evokes in the mind of the reader that the hero of the story is someone "unclean" who will be made "clean" by Jesus. Cf. J. Ernst, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, Regensburg, 1986, p. 513. The name is found in 2 Mac. 10: 19, and might derive from *Zakkai*, which means "righteous" (Cf. Ezr. 2: 9; Neh. 7: 14) thus evoking in the mind of the reader feelings of empathy towards him.

3 R. Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, Gottingen, 1964, p. 34; E. Klostermann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, Tübingen, 1929, ad. loc.

4 Geldenhuys, *op. cit.* 471; I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, Exeter, 1978,

Zacchaeus is called a chief tax collector (*architelônês*), a term which occurs nowhere else in the extant Greek literature.⁵ It may mean that "he was probably, head of a group of tax collectors who were responsible for customs dues in the area on goods passing from Peraea into Judea".⁶ The allusion to his profession may be understood as a pointer to the fact that he was a sinner; and tax collectors and sinners were considered social outcasts and lumped together in popular reckoning (cf. Mt 9: 10-11; 11: 19; Mk 2: 15-16; Lk 5: 30; 7: 34; 15: 1),⁷ because of "the dishonesty which often characterized the activity" of the former.⁸ Jesus who did not hesitate to have table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners (cf. Mt 9: 10-13; Lk 5: 29-32; Mk 2: 15-17) and who being surrounded by them (Lk 15:1-2) is now going to be the guest of a sinner. Sin and saving grace are meeting; the sinner and the Saviour are coming together.

This was made possible because the sinner took the initiative. Luke tells us that Zacchaeus "*sought to see Jesus*" (*ezētei idein*). In fact the right translation should be, as in the NAB, "*he was seeking to see Jesus*".

The use of the imperfect tense would make us conclude that Zacchaeus was eager as well as longing to see Jesus. His search was surely by more than a mere and idle curiosity. "He must have been prompted by some powerful urge, whether it was a desire to escape from his self-imposed loneliness with the help of one who had the name of being friendly to the outcast, or the half-formed determination to have done with a profession that had become burdensome to his conscience"⁹, or the simple yearning and seeking of someone "sick" for grace and "healing"!

pp. 694-95; W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, Berlin, 1978, pp. 358-59; Ernst *op. cit.* 512-13; J. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, Volume 2 [Anchor Bible], New York, 1985, p. 1219. An old Christian tradition testifies to the fact that Zaccheus was Bishop of Caesarea (Strom. IV. 6. 35; Const. Ap. VII. 46, etc.) — cf. T. Zahn, *Das Evangelium das Lukas*, Leipzig / Erlangen, 1920, p. 619.

5 Fitzmyer, *op. cit.* 1223; G. B. Caird, *St. Luke* [Pelican Gospel Commentaries] London, 1971, p. 207.

6 Geldenhuys, *op. cit.* 471; Marshall, *op. cit.* 696; Fitzmyer, *op. cit.* Vol. II, 1223; O. Michel, *TDNT* VIII, 97-99.

7 Tax collectors are also coupled with harlots (Mt 21: 31-32), or with Pharisees (Lk 18: 10), or with robbers, evil doers and adulterers (Lk 18: 11), or even with gentiles (Mt 18: 17).

8 Fitzmyer, *op. cit.* I. 591-92.

9 Caird. *op. cit.* 208; Fitzmyer, *op. cit.* II, 1221; Best, *op. cit.* 513-14.

One cannot but recall here the words of the psalmists running as an undercurrent: "Let the hearts of those who seek (*zêtountôn*) the Lord rejoice: seek (*zêtêsate*) the Lord and his strength, seek (*zetesate*) his presence continually" (Ps. 105: 3-4). Or "My heart has said of you, 'seek (*ezêzêtêsa*) his face', Yahweh, I do seek (*zêtêso*) your face" (JB trans ... Ps. 27: 8). Or again, "Such are the people who seek (*zêtountôn*) him, who seek (*zetounton*) the face of the God of Jacob" (Ps. 24: 6). On all these seekers the blessings of Yahweh will be showered without measure (24: 5); and joy will be poured out in abundance (105: 3).

Zacchaeus was a seeker like the psalmists. He too sought the Lord with earnestness. Joy was the gift bestowed on him. Jesus has responded to his seeking by saying, "I must stay at your house today" (Lk 19: 5). The joy of Zacchaeus knew no bounds. "He was very happy to welcome him" (19: 6). He would have sung with the bride of the Canticles, "I sought (*ezêtêsa*) him whom my soul loves; I sought (*ezetesa*) him ... when I found him whom my soul loves; I held him, and would not let him go until I had brought him into my mother's house ... " (Cant: 3: 1-4). He comes as a good example in confirming Jesus' own teaching: "Seek (*zêteite*) and you will find ... For everyone ... who seeks (*zêtôn*) finds" (Mt 7: 7-9). In seeking Jesus earnestly Zacchaeus was also obeying the other command of Jesus: "seek (*zeteite*) first his kingdom and his righteousness ... " (Mt 6: 33). In accepting Jesus wholeheartedly in his life he receives salvation (Lk 19: 9) which transforms his life both outwardly and inwardly. "When Jesus comes into a person's life and gains authority there, selfishness and dishonesty are irresistibly eradicated."¹⁰ He/she accepts the Kingdom and what it stands for.

Manickavasagar a Tamil saivite saint expresses the constant search of a soul for God through a beautiful and homely imagery:

"Nor friends nor kin I seek; no city I desire,

No name I crave, no learned ones I seek ...

Thy resounding feet I'll seek,

That as a cow yearns for its calf

My longing soul may melt"¹¹

10 Geldenhuys, *op. cit.* 471.

11 *Thiruvasagam* (trans. G. U. Pope), Madras, 1970, pp. 302-303;

Thee to see behold, O Sire, my soul hath yearned ...

For words of tenderness, behold, O Sire, my soul hath yearned ...

There are hundreds of Zacchaeuses in our days who are yearning for, searching after and seeking God. They want an experience. And many sincere seekers do hear the words addressed to them, "Make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today" (Lk 19: 5). Sincere and true seekers will always find rest in their seeking (Mt 11: 28-30) as Zacchaeus found joy as well as salvation as a result of his seeking.

Seeking to be found

Jesus is prompt in returning Zacchaeus' compliment! "By way of reaction to Zacchaeus' initiative, Jesus too takes the initiative and invites himself to the toll-collector's house for lodging"¹². He will come in for severe criticism for what he does (19: 7), but it will not deter him. He will cross the legal boundaries which pharisaic religion has drawn up between a "pious" Jew and "a sinner". He will submit himself to the divine will whose purpose is "to seek and to save the lost" (19: 10). It is a divine necessity for him to go to the sinner. Hence he "must stay" at the sinner's house (19: 5). "By bursting through the barrier of religious prejudice that isolated him, Jesus awakened to vibrant life, impulses that had long lain dormant, and revealed to him the man he was capable of becoming"¹³.

The *longing* by Zacchaeus to see Jesus (*ezêtei idein*) is more than amply rewarded by Jesus' own words in which he reveals his *longing* through his determination to seek out (*zêtesai*) the sinner. Jesus' initiative to stay at the home of Zacchaeus and be his guest and at the same time the affirmation of the purpose of his ministry suggests, as if in a backdrop, the image of the shepherd in Ezekiel. The shepherd is Yahweh himself who "will seek (*zeteso*) the lost and will bring back the strayed" (Ez. 34: 16). The earnest seeker after God (Zacchaeus) is sought after by God himself. "He is reached by him, whom alone he chooses. To him the Atman shows himself"¹⁴. The imagery in Ezekiel continues, as the shepherd is made to say: "I will save my flock" (Ez. 34: 22). The evocation is not far to seek. As the Ezekielian shepherd will

To hear thee say with coral lips:

"Fear not", behold, O Sire, my soul hath yearned.

12 Fitzmyer, *op. cit.* II, 1221.

13 Caird, *op. cit.* 208; J. Thekenath, The Gospel of Luke [Bible Correspondence Course], Bangalore, Vol. 7, p. 21.

14 Mundaka Upanishad, III, 2, 3.

seek (*zêteso*) the sheep and save (*sósó*) them, so has Jesus come to seek (*êlthen ... zêtésai*) and to save (*sósai*) the lost" (Lk 19: 10). Jesus the shepherd goes after Zacchaeus the sheep!

There is something more to be perceived in the episode. Zacchaeus might himself be wanting in his heart of hearts that Jesus rewards his initiative. Is it not true what the psalmist says: "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek (*zêtison*) thy servant" (Ps. 119: 176)? This prayer of the psalmist that the Lord seek him could also be the sentiment of Zacchaeus! "To desire 'to see' God, if genuine, is also a desire 'to be seen' by God"¹⁵. Zacchaeus too small of stature to be noticed by society is spotted out by the Lord; Zacchaeus who was by-passed by others because of religious prejudices is sought out by the Lord; Zacchaeus who was just a tax collector is invited by the Lord to be among his disciples; Zacchaeus who was a sinner is embraced by the Saviour in table fellowship!! God who chose and welcomed into his service, Abraham (who was a liar: Gen: 20: 1-3), Jacob (who was crafty: Gen. 27: 18-29), Moses (who was a murderer: (Ex. 2: 11-12) and David (who was an adulterer: 2 Sam 11: 1-5) etc. now chooses Zacchaeus the sinner and wants to be welcomed by him into his house.

We may also notice behind the picture of Jesus the seeker the shepherd who had lost a sheep and the woman who had lost a coin as portrayed by Luke earlier (cf. 15: 3-10). The evocative power of the Zacchaeus-episode when placed in parallel with the two above parables cannot but strike one. It shows how all of them are moving on the same wave-length.

- : The shepherd goes after (*poreuetai*) the one which is lost (*apolôlos*) (15: 4);
- : The woman seeks (*zêtei*) diligently the lost coin (*apolesē*) (15: 8);
- : Jesus came to seek (*zêtésai*) the lost (*apolôlos*) (19: 10)

In all 3 instances the note of joy (in the case of the two parables the Joy of God and that of the neighbours, and in the Zacchaeus-episode the Joy of Zacchaeus and his household at finding salvation) dominates the scene. There is a joy of discovery in each of the three cases. The discovery of the sheep makes the

15 Thekenath, *op. cit.* 22.

shepherd happy (*chara*); the finding of the coin makes the woman happy (*chara*); the astonishing words of Jesus, "I must stay at your house today" (19: 5) makes Zacchaeus and his family happy (*chairôn*)!

This initiative of Jesus breaks through symbolically for all times the oppressive barriers of caste, creed, colour, race, language etc. It breaks through the limits of decorum by the fact that Jesus does not wait to be invited, but invites himself; it breaks through the distinction of sinners and the righteous since Jesus the holy one of God seeks to be in the company of the disreputed.¹⁶ Zacchaeus sought to see Jesus; and Jesus in his turn has sought Zacchaeus. Jesus has shown, as in many other cases (cf. 5: 27-32; 7: 36-50; Mk 1: 40-45 etc.), that on the one hand no social rank, however mean or low excludes salvation, and on the other, it is offered especially to the last, the least and the lost.

Seeking and Discipleship

The story of Zacchaeus evokes also the theme of discipleship. It instils into the heart of the reader that discipleship is a gift and a grace, for Jesus "calls to him those whom he desires" (Mk 3: 13; Gal 1: 15-16; Jer 1: 5; Is. 49: 1-3 etc.). In his company there is place for everyone — saint and sinner, rich and poor, fisherfolks, tax collectors and Zealots. In the case of Zacchaeus he being the chief of tax collectors, may be considered also the "chief of sinners". Yet the call of Jesus reaches out to him too.

In the case of disciples "they left everything and followed him" (Lk 5: 1-11). In the case of Zacchaeus he is already with a disposition to follow Jesus since he is in the habit of giving half of what he owns to the poor and if any kick backs or black mail is involved in his business dealings he is willing to repair the damage according to the rules set down in the Torah (Ex. 21: 37).¹⁷ Here

16 J. K. Kodell, *The Gospel According to Luke*, Minnesota, 1982, p. 91.

17 Fourfold restitution was imposed by the Torah only for one case (Ex 21: 37). Roman Law however demanded it of all convicted thieves. Zaccheus goes further and accepts obligation for any case of injustice for which he might have been responsible. Of the two interpretations, namely, his resolve to change his ways (in the future) or his habitual way of doing things (in the past), we prefer the former, since the latter position would make the role of Jesus unnecessary for salvation — cf. K. J. Karris, *The Gospel according to Luke*, in NJBC, Bangalore 1990. p. 711. We may say that Jesus' love for him has awakened in him new avenues and possibilities of love, service, charity

is one who far from making a display of his righteousness, publicly admits his guilt and his responsibility and promises repentance,¹⁸ an apt disposition to be a disciple in the company of Jesus.

If Jesus has said to the rich ruler, "sell all that you have and distribute to the poor ... and come, follow me" (Lk 18: 22; 12: 33; cf. also Acts 2: 45; 4: 32), Zacchaeus has been constantly doing just that and is willing to continue that. That is the reason Jesus says "I must stay at your house" (19: 5). The disciples come to stay with him (*par autô ðmeinai*: Jn 1: 39); the master too comes to stay with the disciple (*en tô oikô sou dei me meînai*). This mutuality of "staying with" cannot but evoke the homely image of the vine and the branches which Jesus himself has expounded in which the same expressions ("Abide in me and I in you", in Greek "*meinate en emoi, Kagô en hymin* — cf. Jn: 15: 1-7) are used, which bring out the idea of the disciple and the master being united in their being and in their mission.

As a true disciple Zacchaeus is prompt to follow Jesus' command. In the case of the shepherds of Bethlehem Luke notes that they heard the good news of great joy (*charan megalên*) and went with haste (*speusantes*) to meet the author as well as the bringer of the good news. In the case of Zacchaeus, he too ran with haste (*speusas*: 19: 6) to receive the giver of the good gifts of salvation with joy (*chairôn*: 19: 6).¹⁹ Yes, in both cases they have "found a pearl of great value" (Mt 13: 45) and nothing will deter them from obtaining it and possessing it. Besides, Zacchaeus also shows that he is a true disciple in so far as he obeys readily the marching orders of the master. Jesus tells him to make haste (19: 5) and Zacchaeus promptly obeys him in making haste and coming down from the tree (19: 6), for he is neither a summer time soldier nor a fair weather follower!

The promptness and willingness of Zacchaeus to be obedient to the call of Jesus brings also his family into the picture. Jesus not only comes and stays with his family; he also offers salvation to the whole household. If the family of Zacchaeus has been involved in the disreputable work of his, it should also be the beneficiary in the blessings Jesus has brought to Zacchaeus. In

and justice — cf. Kodell, *op. cit.* 92.

18 Fitzmyer, *op. cit.* 1125; Kodell, *op. cit.* 92; Thekenath, *op. cit.* 21.

19 Ernst *op. cit.* 514.

both good and bad the family stands together. Especially is this true in Oriental cultures as contrasted with western mores! As in other cases in the Acts of the Apostles where the household comes together as the recipient of salvation (cf. Acts 10: 2, 11: 14; 16: 15, 31; 18: 8)²⁰, so is it here that the whole family of Zacchaeus obtains the benediction of the Lord; and we may presume, they too became his disciples!

Further, the discipleship of Zacchaeus may be seen in the light of the episode of the rich ruler portrayed in the previous chapter of Luke (18: 18-30). He is in fact presented as a foil to the rich young man, who was called by Jesus to be his disciple. He could not bring himself to "sell all ... and distribute to the poor ... and follow" Jesus because "he was very rich" (18: 22-23). Zacchaeus, also a rich man, on the contrary, divests himself of half of his wealth to give to the poor (19: 8). It is riches that hinder the young man to be in the company of Jesus; but it is the sharing of the same riches that brings Zacchaeus closer to Jesus. The use of riches which distances the young man away from Jesus, leads Zacchaeus to be at home with Jesus; the parting from riches which makes the rich man sad (18: 23), brings about joy and happiness to Zacchaeus (19: 6). Zacchaeus is indeed "an exemplary rich person who has understood something of Jesus' ministry and message and concern for the poor and the cheated".²¹

Finally, the episode of Zacchaeus, placed as it is after the healing of the blind man, has its evocative resonance too. In both cases it is a question of "seeing". The blind man wants to receive his sight; he wants to see (18: 41). Zacchaeus too "sought to see" (19: 3) Jesus. Both receive the sight; the former physical sight and the latter spiritual sight. The reader is thus led to move on from what is physical to what is spiritual and salvific. The episode of Zacchaeus thus becomes a story which is loaded and pregnant with meaning and significance for all times and all readers.

Conclusion

We have tried in a small way to bring out the hidden beauty and the richness in evocation of the episode of Zacchaeus. The

20 Caird, *op. cit.* 208; Marshall, *op. cit.* 698

21 Fitzmyer, *op. cit.* 1222.

story is a vast mine from which we may go on drawing out riches without limits. The allusions, overtones, insinuations and nuances are too vast to be exhausted within reasonable limits of an article of an exploratory nature.

It is a story not of an individual seeker after God. It is your story and mine. It is a story of all the seekers of God and of all who seek for what is good and beautiful in the world and in human beings. It is a story that tells us that in seeking God we must encounter his image and likeness in every human being, especially the poor. It is a story that reminds us that it is in and through ordinary events Jesus enters into our life. It is a story that conveys the idea that discipleship is offered to all of us — sinner and saint — irrespective of our worth. It is a story that reminds us that we need not change our avocations in order to be disciplined by Jesus in his school of discipleship. It is a story that instructs us that in the midst of and in the heart of the hustle and bustle of the world there is a God who is calling us to attention and service. It is a story which demands from everyone that we seek him in order to be sought by him. It is in a nutshell a story of God who enters into us to seek and save us. It is in fact the story of "the hound of heaven" !

St. Paul's Seminary
Tiruchirapalli 620 001

R. J. Raja

The Kairos of the Galilaioi

An Indian Liberationist Reading of John 1-7

The first seven chapters of John show the conflict between two traditions, represented by the geographical categories of Galilee and Jerusalem. The *Galilaioi* (Galileans) stand for the little tradition of the common people, while "the Jews" represent the higher tradition of the elite. Jesus understands the arrest of John the Dipper as the decisive moment, the *kairos* to rouse the *Bahujan* of Galilee in order to rally them round the Kingdom of God. He found acceptance among these oppressed and outcast and sharing people, and was inevitably rejected by the Jewish elite, that exploited them. A close study of this situation shows its relevance for India today. Here too the *Bahujan* are being oppressed and swallowed up by a dominant higher tradition. They eagerly await a liberative tradition (the Kingdom of God) that will not only satisfy their material needs but offer them transcendent values that will give them a credible and lasting identity in the future. Such a liberative tradition must not destroy the little traditions with their style of a corporate, sharing life and togetherness. Rather it must work for a creative integration of its values with the values of the little traditions. The *kairos* has come for the *Galilaioi* in India, and a decisive move from the liberative tradition to achieve such an integrated "tradition of traditions" is the need of the hour.

The disciples of Jesus need to decipher the *kairos* graphics on the walls of history and distinguish it from the *chronos* of history. Jesus lived in the *chronos* of history, but he was diligent enough to discern the *kairos* in the *chronos*. The arrest of John the dipper was a decisive moment in Jesus' life and he affirmed this as the *kairos* in order to preach the *euangelion* of the Kingdom of God (*basileia tou theou* — Mk 1: 15). The arrest of John the Dipper passed off in the *chronos* as a usual event for ordinary people, but Jesus deciphered this event as the decisive moment, the *kairos* to raise the trumpet call to the *min Galilee* (the Galilean heretics) and the *Bahujan* of Galilee in order to rally them around him for the Kingdom of God.

The first seven chapters of John's Gospel show the conflict of two traditions and this is plotted out in geographical categories: Galilee and Jerusalem. The Galilaei (the Galileans) represent the "little tradition", and the Judaei (the Jews) represent a dominant "higher tradition".

A Historical Sketch

The Galileans were predominantly gentiles in pre-exilic times.¹ Even in the whole of Galilee the actual Jewish population was only a slender minority.² However during the post-Maccabean period intensive Judaizing was initiated in Galilee, but those who turned to the Jewish cult remained scarce (cf. I Macc. 5: 14-17, 20-22). During the time of Aristobulus I (104-103 B. C. E.) a few were forcibly converted.³

According to Martin Hengel, Galilee was the centre of the resistance movement and there were groups of 'robbers' who were known for their bravery and love of freedom.⁴ Due to the absence of good leadership they lacked unity of action against their enemies and this paved the way for the scattering and defeat. Also because of their independent and recalcitrant attitude in religious matters, the Pharisees of the higher Jerusalem tradition had a poor opinion about the Galileans. Many were deprived of their basic means of production. There was a systematic and accelerated dispossessing of the local peasantry. Most of the best land belonged to the large landowners, while small property holders seem to have concentrated in the hill country. The burden of taxation was heavy, specially on the lower classes. This led to frequent revolts which were repressed with an iron hand. Around the lake, a goodly number of Galileans made a living by fishing.

The Jesus movement began in an atmosphere of fear and resentment, of crushing poverty and messianic expectations. Preaching of the Kingdom of God was a sign of dissent, and claiming of Messiah to the Son of David was viewed in the light

1 Emil Schurer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* Vol. II, ed. G. Vermes et alii (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986) 7.

2 Ibid., 8. 3 Ibid., 9.

4 Martin Hengel, *The Zealots: Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I until 70 A. D.* trans. David Smith (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989). Also see Sherman E. Johnson, *Jesus and his Towns* (Wilmington: Glazier, 1989) 26-37.

of apocalyptic revolts and suspected by the imperial authorities and their Jewish collaborators.

In John's gospel, the narrator talks about Jesus' to-and-fro movement from Galilee to Jerusalem. There was a time in Jesus' ministry when he resorted to be with the Galileans, especially in the face of opposition (Jn. 1: 1-3). His relation with "the Jews" and their tradition was one of confrontation and challenge. He comforted (2: 11) and corrected (6: 32) and led the Galileans to confession (6: 34). Even though Jesus had a preferential option for the Galileans, he did not deny that option to the victims of the Jerusalem higher tradition (see chs. 5, 9, 11). Nevertheless he spent his time with the Galilean little tradition and established a strong relation with them.

Jerusalem Higher Tradition and "the Jews" as its Patrons

A cursory survey of the first seven chapters of John's Gospel reveals certain features of the higher tradition. First of all, even though this tradition claims to be the patron saint of true religious tradition and worship, there was an absolute abuse of the worship of God (Jn. 2: 13f). The place that was allotted in the temple for the gentiles, women and proselytes to come and honour YHWH was used for accumulating wealth. Money making takes precedence and became the objective of worship and religion in the high tradition.

Secondly, those who claim to be teachers and rulers of the people in this higher tradition lack understanding and knowledge (Jn. 3: 1, 10). Claiming to be the protagonists of the Kingdom of God they exhibit total ignorance of the basics of the kingdom.

Thirdly, this tradition totally ignored and isolated the victims and the marginalized among them to their fate (Jn. 5: 2ff). In ch. 5: 5 the paralyzed victim was lying in Bethzatha in Jerusalem which has a pool and five porticos, for thirty eight years. There also lay a collection (*plethos*) of invalids, blind, lame and paralysed. They lay in wait that something good may come from this tradition, a tradition into which they were perhaps baptized with false hopes. The gravity of the indifference towards them is shown by the comment of one of the victims — there have been no man to put him to this pool in order to get delivered (v. 7).

Fourthly, inspite of their ignorance and victimization of others, they glory in their religion and tradition (Jn. 5: 10). Sabbath the 'holy day' need to be observed at all cost, of course not as a day of release and rest. The delight of deliverance of a victim in the higher tradition is scolded off as a grave sin and violation of the values ceaselessly observed in the higher tradition.

Fifthly, in such a tradition with oppressive and exploitative value systems, the movement of Jesus was viewed with grave suspicion. The supporters of the higher tradition did not like Jesus, as liberator, to isolate the Galilean multitude from their sphere of influence and lead them to liberative and redemptive truth (Jn. 6: 41). They found Jesus as the one who stirs the status quo (2: 16; 5: 12) and attracts the *ochlos*, the Bahujan towards him. The Jews who murmured against Jesus in ch. 6 in Galilee can be considered as the patrons of the higher tradition who have settled down in the Galilean territories. This could be viewed as the result of centuries of Judaizing process which the higher tradition attempted in order to establish control over the little Galilean tradition in the north.

Sixthly, the higher tradition resorted to personal accusation in order to demoralize and discourage the attempts of Jesus. They began to speak ill of Jesus (6: 42), a direct attack on his pedigree and possibly his progeny. This proved to be a strong weapon in the hands of the protagonists of the higher tradition to put down and destroy the integrity and credibility of those in the little tradition who opted to join in the liberative tradition.

Seventhly, the Jerusalem higher and exploitative tradition refused to listen to what Jesus says (6: 52). This shows, first of all, their unwillingness to accept the work of any redeemer among the Galileans and secondly their unwillingness to part with the Galilean Bahujan. Since a large number of Galileans were baptized into the higher tradition, the latter valued them to be a source of income for the higher tradition particularly in times of feasts and festivals when they pour down all what they have earned to appease the higher tradition and systems. The structures of the higher tradition is flourishing due to its exploitation of the little tradition, so any voice of dissent will be deposed with full force (Jn. 19: 6).

Lastly, in all practical purposes, the higher tradition looked down upon the little tradition. The Jews of the Jerusalem tradition looked down upon the Galileans and the place they live — Galilee (7: 41, 52). For them the deliverer can only be from their tradition and there cannot be one from the little tradition. They employ all means to thwart the changed perspectives of those of the little tradition (6: 41, 52; 7: 1).

Jesus and the Galilean Little Tradition

The Synoptic Gospels give a clear picture of the conditions of Galilee and the Bahujan Galileans. Matthew describes it as the 'land of Zebulun' and the 'land of Naphtali' 'towards the sea', and 'across the Jordan'. All these areas come under the boundary of Galilee and its inhabitants are generally known as Gentiles (Mt. 4: 15ff). Recently scholarly investigations also approve of this fact.⁵ The inhabitants were living in darkness and in the shadow of death (cf. Is. 9: 1-2). The people were poor, captives, blind, oppressed and economically deprived of their God-given share (the jubilee blessing) (Lk. 4: 16-19).

In the Gospel of John they are seen scattered over Cana, Capernaum, Samaria and Galilee. The marriage narration in Jn 2: 1-11 tells us that even at the time of a marriage, a time when generally people store and share all they can with the guests, in this particular family in Cana, "the wine gave out". "They have no wine" (2: 3). This shows that, in spite of their every effort, they could store only that quantity of wine which was inadequate for the wedding guests. They were poor and those who gathered also would not be a different lot. John notes one important aspect of the corporate and social life of the people who were living in these regions. They loved family atmosphere and Jesus too was not an exception (Jn. 2: 12). They loved to live together. Perhaps their economic deprivation, social alienation, political oppression and cultural and religious humiliation made them to cement their own corporate togetherness.

Side by side with this, John presents to us the life situation of the Samaritan half Jews (Jn. 4). Jesus passes through this region on his way again to Galilee (4: 3). The Samaritans are poor, scheduled as low caste untouchables who are known

5 Emil Schurer, Martin Hengel, Justo Gonzalez and others.

for their loose living. Nevertheless, they long for establishing their identity within the dominant tradition. The Samaritan woman, who is an untouchable, with whom the 'Jews have no dealing', boasts of 'our father Jacob who gave us this well' (v. 12). This is the vain hope and longing of a shattered and battered people, who have nothing to resort to in order to build their identity. They, therefore, turn to the available identity—the dominant but dehumanizing Jewish Jerusalem higher tradition.

All the above narratives tell us that when Jesus revealed himself as the helper, as one among them and as the real living water; the wedding guests opened their mouth to drink the 'new wine', they stayed with him and received the living water, for these events were redeeming and liberative.

When Jesus turned to the Galilean Bahujan, John writes that the Galileans welcomed him (4: 45). This verse tells us that they received Jesus because they had "seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast". Interestingly John narrates only two incidents prior to 4: 45 which Jesus had done at Jerusalem—confronting the religious-minded, money-making temple authorities and challenging one of the ruler cum teacher of the Jews who lacks understanding of the kingdom of God (2: 13ff and 3: 1ff). These deeds appealed to the Galileans. Jesus concretely revealed the exploitation, futility and the vanity of the higher tradition and its false religious claims—a thing that the *Galilaeoi* longed to see someone doing. John 4: 45 again reveals one more important aspect about the sociological life of the Galileans. It says that 'they too had gone to the feast' in Jerusalem. This means that until the coming of this deliverer the *Galilaeoi* go all the way to Jerusalem, to the higher tradition, somehow to relate their identity to the Jerusalem dominant tradition (cf. 4: 12). Until now the Galileans had no other place to go for establishing their identity. So they used to go to Jerusalem and spend all what they have at the feast, claiming Jewish heritage which the dominant tradition never accepted (7: 41, 52; 4: 9). They were branded as *ochloi*, the *ammê-ha âretz* who do not know the law and are accursed (7: 49).

The Galileans are simple and innocent people who believed in Jesus by seeing the signs (4: 48) of deliverance which Jesus brought, by confronting the dominant tradition at every opportune

time and by being identified with the Galileans. Jesus loved to be with them (1: 43; 2: 1; 4: 3, 45; 6: 1, 2; 7: 1, 9). He provided for their needs, he found comfort in the midst of them and he loved to move about in all Galilee and remain there (7: 9). John tells us that the Galileans are the *Bahujan* (*ochlos*), which means that they are not merely a crowd, a gathering of people. *Bahujan* has a particular caste, geographic, ethnic identity. A tradition is implied, perhaps an ignored little tradition. They are ignorant of the law and are accursed by the gods (7: 49). They followed Jesus (6: 2) due to the signs which Jesus performed. Exhibition of signs is inevitable to draw the people of the little tradition, for now they want concrete evidence and when the signs are performed the *Bahujan* follow in multitude.

Interestingly in John we could notice that in the first Pass-over feast these *Bahujan* resorted to the higher tradition and participated in its festivities (4: 45d) in order to establish their identity. But in the second feast (6: 4) they came to Jesus for a feast and that too on a mountain (6: 3-5). This means that they have seen and tasted the long awaited identity in Jesus' movement. They have seen what Jesus did to the dominant tradition with their eyes (4: 45) and the desire of Jesus to identify with their little tradition. Jesus' movement made the difference in between these two Jewish feasts and now for the Galilean *Bahujan* the feast of the higher tradition does not count much and they learned to survive without the participation in the dominant tradition and its festivities. This switching over of affinity was drastic, sudden and radical.

An important feature of the Galilean *Bahujan* is that once they realize the redeeming signs, in confronting the higher exploitative tradition and identifying with their little tradition, they start coming towards the redeeming signs, the liberative tradition; they come in large numbers and that will surprise or even embarrass even the accomplices of the redeeming signs (6: 5, 7). Once they come and get their identity, they are willing to feast with the liberating tradition in whatever it gives them, even in a deserted place (6: 12).

The Galilean *Bahujan* were longing for their political and economic deliverance for a long time and therefore when the redeeming signs were revealed among them via Jesus they resorted

to make Jesus the symbol of their political and economic deliverance (6:5). Their desire to have a politico-economic deliverance is natural. But the liberative tradition (Jesus) is devoid of any selfish politico-economic ambition as such, for his longing is the kingdom of God and this demands a step ahead. Similarly, their following of Jesus as their liberator was for meeting their physical needs (6: 26-29). No wonder that those who are in the little tradition have no other desire, for they are forced in to such a situation due to the structural exploitative methods of the dominant tradition. The liberative tradition need not look down upon those of the little tradition, if at all they come to them in order to meet their immediate physical needs.

It is important to note that Jesus after meeting their physical needs did not leave them to their destiny. He leads them to deeper and transcendent truth and belief where their identity will be secure (6:27-29). Perhaps this is the vital clue in securing a permanent and secure identity for the Galilean *Bahujan*.⁶ Of course when the question of accepting this permanent identity is put forward (6: 29) these innocent Galileans will begin to withdraw and try to take refuge again in their ignorantly inherited dehumanizing higher tradition (6:31). For this, we cannot find fault with them for this is the way they have been trained and brain washed for generations.

Jesus did not try to cut them off from their little traditions, for he believed that the liberative tradition coupled with the little tradition of the Galileans will be a formidable force in building a secure and sufficient identity for the Galilean *Bahujan*. Jesus spends more time to build up this integrated tradition (6: 32-33). This is very vital. It was after much effort of perseverance and perhaps also persuasion that these Galilean *Bahujan* were brought to a confession. When they realized the mystery of the integrated approach towards their identity, they all in one voice cried out "Lord, give us this bread always" (6:34).

When such a state is achieved, opposition is sure to occur against this approach. The patrons of the higher tradition living among the Galilean *Bahujan* will come to know about this and

6 "Black Bishop Azariah must walk out with Dalits if upper caste Christians fail to accept our 10-point ultimatum", *Dalit Voice* 13 (1-15 September 1994) 6
See also, B. R. Ambedkar, *Why Caste for Conversion?*

they will use all the powers that are at their disposal to thwart this integrated identity of the *Bahujan* (6: 41, 66) and they may try to snatch out some from this newly emerged tradition. But those who are genuine and realized the mystery and power of this identity will stay even in the face of opposition (6: 68-69). Attempts will be there to annihilate the agents of the liberative integrated tradition (7: 1). However for Jesus the *kairos* is to remain in Galilee (7: 9) in order to accomplish his purpose, for Jesus believed that the *kairos* has come for the *Galilaioi Bahujan*.

A Contextual Theological Reflection

Geographically the peripheral part of India which are predominantly jungles, mountains and backward areas are inhabited by the *Bahujan*, original inhabitants of the land. They have settled here not by their own choice, but they were forced to scatter into these areas by their invaders who forcefully occupied their earlier possessions and land.⁷ Even in these peripheral areas the conquerors did not leave them to their fate.⁸ There is a systematic and recurring economic, religious and cultural conquest, both directly and indirectly. Exclusive pockets of people of high and dominant tradition are visible in areas of people belonging to the little tradition. This resembles what is called the process of Judaization of Galilee. In India we have its sister — Sanskritization and Hinduization of Dalits, *Bahujan* and the original inhabitants. They are the '*ammê-ha-arêtz* of India, the accursed ones, the ones who do not know or are not even permitted to know the Vedas (the law).

The people of the little tradition are scheduled as low castes, untouchables, unapproachables, and harijans which has a subtle connotation towards their indecent origin in the eyes of those of the higher tradition. They are branded as illiterates, who deserve no mercy or reservation instead they are divinely destined to sustain and serve those of the higher tradition as part of their *karma* in order to attain a blissful rebirth in the higher tradition. This has

7 Gustav Oppert, *On the Original Inhabitants of Bharatvarsha or India* (New Delhi: Unity Book, 1986 [1893]). On philological, historical and circumstantial grounds he argues that the original inhabitants were chased out from their habitations by the invading Aryans.

8 Manoj Prasad, "Tillers on the Move in Bihar", *Indian Express* [New Delhi] (5 September 1994) 5.

been the deceitful hope that made those of the little tradition to undergo all agonies of life. Attempts were made via political means, for centuries, to baptize those of the little traditions into the dominant tradition, as was done by the Maccabean descendants and the Roman imperial powers via the Herodian 'proselytes' in Galilee. If at all the *Bahujan* have resorted to the higher tradition, it is merely to establish their identity. This writer while on a visit to some villages in Orissa has noticed that the so called 'harijans' from a village had gone to Puri, the brahmin 'holy place' and performed a certain costly ceremony and come back claiming to be brahmins. But the tragic fact is that neither did the people of their immediate neighbourhood accept them as brahmins, nor did the brahmins who made them so treat them as equals. We have yet to see a 'dalit brahmin' as the Shankaracharya of Sringeri, Kashi or even Puri!

The Dalits, the Dravidians, the Adi-Dravidas, the Tribals and all the Scheduled castes and tribes of India are increasingly aware in recent years of their pre-Hindu roots. This has made the protagonists of the higher Hindu tradition call these segments of Indian society heretics, just as the Jews called the Galileans the *mîn Galilee* (Galilean heretics).

The people of the various little traditions of India are eagerly waiting to see signs of liberative and freeing traditions from any quarter, so that they may join it *en masse*. This has happened in the past, it is happening in the present at various levels. The followers of the Real Liberator must catch the *kairos* and act. They may show signs of deliverance that the *Bahujan* of the little tradition may see and believe. The *kairos* has come to concentrate fully on the *Bahujan*, those of the little tradition, so that it may stir a jealousy in the higher tradition, so that they may in their turn accept the real liberative tradition (Rom. 11: 13f).

The signs of the liberative tradition need to be concrete and visible, that the *Bahujan* may flow towards it and seek their integral identity in it. A politically and economically motivated move from those of the little tradition may be viewed in the *kairos* perspective. They have seen in the *chronos* that only such a move could deliver them from the clutches of the dominant exploitative tradition. Political polarization is natural, and economic ambitions are inevitable. The liberative tradition should not be content with

satisfying these, for such efforts alone have not so far settled problems in human history. The goal ought to be the Kingdom of God, the entry into which is pre-conditioned in the Gospels with the imperatives *metanoete* and *pisteuete* (repent and believe — Mk 1: 15). This calls for an individual as well as a corporate transformation of the people who are coming into the Kingdom. Leading the *Bahujan* to the transcendent truth along with meeting their physical needs is vital to assure a credible and lasting identity for them in the future.

Often those who became the followers of Jesus and the liberating tradition are ridiculed as 'rice Christians' by those of the Dominant tradition. This, to some extent, is true. Meeting the need of their stomach was their priority and so, in the past, those of the little tradition looked upon the followers of Jesus for their food. Jesus fed such Galileans with what he could (Jn 6:9;12), and made them to follow him.

The liberative tradition must have *dynamis* (power) to reveal the futility and vanity of the higher exploitative Hindu tradition and religious culture. It is at this point the Dalits are going to join in the liberative tradition *en masse*.

A warning to the liberative tradition: do not try to destroy the little traditions and their style of corporate, sharing life and togetherness. A corporate, collective and caring life of the tribals and of those of the little tradition is unique in India; and it is this pattern of life that the higher tradition attempted to torpedo by their individualistic, self-centred religious values and culture. They tried to amalgamate and fuse the little traditions into their higher tradition for their own advantage. This was aimed at extinguishing the little traditions or subjugating them to generations of slavery and economic deprivation. The liberative tradition needs to work for a creative integration of its values with the values of the little traditions and make the little traditions credible. Such an 'integrated tradition of traditions' can function as a bulwark to thwart all the attempts of the exploitative, dehumanizing higher tradition (cf. Jn 6:34, 68f.).

Attempts to destroy the integrated tradition are sure to occur. Viewing the Gospel tradition and its liberators with

suspicion is not uncommon in India. The patrons of the higher tradition wield power in politics, in bureaucracy, in business and in media. But they cannot stand against the integrated liberative tradition, if this is put into proper perspective. The *Bahujan's* reluctance to accept the liberative tradition need not upset us. When they see the 'signs' they are sure to follow.

The *kairos* has come for the *Galilaioi* in India. A definite and decisive move from the liberative tradition towards achieving an integrated tradition, for a visible and credible identity for the people of the land is the need of the hour.

Luther W. New Jr
Theological College
P. O. Kulhan, Challang
Dehra Dun, 248 001

Simon Samuel

Divinisation Through Grace

Understanding a Johannine Theme in the Light of Saiva-Siddhanta

Saivism is an ancient religion existing in India from before the advent of the Aryans. Saiva-Siddhanta is a sect of Saivism with a highly developed philosophy and theology. The article attempts to understand the Johannine theme of birth in the Spirit, in the light of Saiva-Siddhanta. A systematic exposition of Saiva-Siddhanta and its understanding of rebirth, shows how it can enrich Christian soteriology by providing a more profound understanding of the bondages from which one is liberated, and by offering a new more personal feminine image of the Spirit, derived from the *satti* of the siddhantins.

The human person's new birth in the Spirit as a child of God is an important theme in Johannine soteriology. In fact, this new birth qualifies a person for the reign of God.

But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood, or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God (Jn 1:12-13).

Jesus answered him [Nicodemus] I tell you, no one can see the Kingdom of God without being born from above (Jn 3:3)

Understanding John's idea of new birth in the light of Saiva Siddhanta is what is attempted in this paper. Saivism is an ancient religion that was prevalent among the Indian people before the advent of the Aryans. Saiva Siddhanta is an advanced sect of Saivism, with a highly evolved system of philosophy and theology.

The Concept of New birth in Saiva Siddhanta

In spite of their belief in transmigration, the siddhantins do believe in a new birth that is not to be confused with biological births. In fact they have a definite name for this work of

Siva's grace, namely, *thaduttu atkollal*. It means that as the soul is going in one way, it is encountered by Śiva, who, imparting grace, turns it completely away from that path and takes it to himself. Prior to that, the soul goes through many births, working out its *kanmam* (fruits of works)¹ and gradually getting enlightened. These births are biological. When the time is ripe, there is a personal encounter with Siva, at which there is a radical metamorphosis resulting in a new birth through grace.

For this study I have limited myself to only one of the scriptures of *Saiva Siddhanta* namely, the *Meikanda Śāstram*, a collection of fourteen books.² In one of these called the *Tīru Arutpayan* (The Fruit of Divine Grace), it is said:

As one possessed by the devil are you when you are (re)born

Then you remain without any actions (*Tīru Arutpayan*, 77).

This verse means that when a person is possessed by the devil, the actions done by the person are not his or hers but rather devil's acts through the person. Similarly, when one is born again the actions are not his or hers but Siva's. Here the new birth stands for the disappearance of the ego and the manifestation of God-likeness. This state of the soul is brought about by grace which remains indivisible from Siva. In the siddhantin's terminology, a person loses *pasutvam* (qualities of human nature) and attains *śivatvam* (qualities pertaining to Siva):

Our Lord (Siva) is invisible from grace

which he gives to the souls that they may become like him
(*Tīru Arutpayan*)

The Unliberated Soul

To understand how Siva brings about *śivatvam* in a soul through grace, we should know the condition of the soul when it begins its journey towards liberation. According to the siddhantins, it is impossible to speak of the nature of the soul in its origin, because they believe that the soul is eternal and uncreated. But we can speak of its condition at the time of

1 The word *anavam*, *kanmam* and *mayai* are more widely known in their Sanskrit equivalents *ahamkar*, *karma*, but I keep to the less well known Tamil terms because according to the siddhantins they represent the original form.

2 All translations from the books of the *Meikanda Sastram* are the author's.

pralaya or cosmic dissolution, when the whole cosmos goes back to its causal state. The soul then is in a kind of swoon, unable to perceive, think, desire, choose or act. As a spiritual entity the soul cannot have such inertia as its nature. Such a sad condition is due to the fact that an unredeemed soul is in union with three *malams* or impurities, namely, *anavam*, *kanmam* and *māyai*. These do not belong to the nature of the soul but inhere in it beginninglessly. The Siddhantins say that just as no one can say when the husk gets attached to the grain of rice when it is formed, similarly no one can say when the soul gets infected with the three *malams* (impurities).

The Three Malams

1) *Ānavam*: This is the self-asserting egoism of the soul forgetting its dependency on God for any action. Because of *anavam* when the soul is without a body it is not capable of knowing anything; and when it is united to a body it is able to know only the phenomenal world, but not itself or God. So *anava malam* is compared to the darkness of ignorance. This is not merely the absence of light, but something positive that inheres in the soul. The condition of the soul infected with *anavam malam* is explained in the *Tiru Arutpayan* as follows:

Like the owl that does not see in the bright day-light
So are those who do not see with the eternal eye.

(*Tiru Arutpayan*, 19)

The eternal eye is the eye of wisdom that comes with enlightenment through grace. In broad daylight the owl is blind and cannot see anything, because it is not sensitive to sunlight. Even so, though God is everywhere and in all beings, the soul is not capable of seeing the divine presence while it remains in union with *anava malam*. According to *Saiva Siddhanta* the soul is eternal and uncreated by Siva, so that there is no question of Siva having to take any interest to better its condition. If he does so it is absolutely gratuitous.

2) *Kanmam*: By *kanmam* the siddhantins mean the fruits of one's actions attached to the soul. *Kanmam* is responsible for the births and rebirths a soul has to pass through in the process of liberation. Just as a fruit eaten produces enjoyment in the present and seed to produce another tree, similarly

actions done with desire produce pleasure or pain at the moment and *kanmam* which determines the next birth. *Kanmam* may be good or bad. Good *kanmam* does not win liberation but only happiness in the next life. It does not cancel out the bad *kanmam* either. Unlike kanmic actions that take place at a particular time, *mula kanmam* is beginningless and all-pervading. It is this *mula kanmam* that infects the soul as and is the cause of the soul accumulating *kanmam*.

3) *Māyai*: This is one of the threefold aspects of reality for the siddhantins. It is the universal substratum, the material cause (though it is not matter) of the created world. In this meaning it is not an impurity. When *mayai* is acted upon by *adi sattī* (the primal energy or grace of Siva) it gives rise to a number of evolutes, namely, *tanu* (bodies), *karana* (organs, both physical and phychic), *bhuvanam* (worlds) and *bhogam* (objects of experience). At the dawn of creation, after the world rest, the soul waking from its state of swoon finds itself being actively seduced and deluded by the evolutes of *mayai*, the outside world alluring it and the faculties of the body finding pleasure in being seduced. The soul is excited by attraction and aversion and experiences pleasure and pain. Thus *mayai* subjects the soul to the law of *kanmam* and delivers it to a chain of transmigrations by producing bonds of attraction (*pāsam*) with the phenomenal world. It is in this sense that *mayai* is considered an impurity.

The Grace of Siva

In Saiva siddhanta grace is known under the name *sattī*, which, literally means 'energy'. It is also known as boundless wisdom and emanates from Siva as the rays emanate from the sun. Just as the sun does all its work through its rays, even so Siva does his liberative works through grace. Two great books of the *Meikanda Śāstram*, namely, *Śivajnāna Bodham* and *Sivajnana Siddhiar* speak of this:

Grace that is *sattī*, is God
from all eternity.

Without grace there is no God
and no grace without Him.

They are for those who have the eyes of wisdom
like the sun inseparable from its rays.

(*Sivajnana Bodham*, V. 33)

That Siva does his work of liberating souls through *satti* is brought out in the *Sivajnana Siddhilar* too:

Aran's [Siva's] *satti* is grace;

Without grace there is no Siva

Without Siva no grace.

As the sun dispels darkness for the eyes to see

So God, for the souls, through his grace

drives away illusion

and grants them realisation.

(*Sivajnana Siddhilar*, *subakkam*, V. 9)

True to the understanding of one aspect of liberation as enlightenment, *satti* is seen as wisdom emanating from Siva: "Satti's form is boundless wisdom" (*Sivajnana Siddhilar*, *subakkam*, 1,62)

This pure, infinite grace-wisdom-love that emanates from Siva is called *chit satti* or *para-satti*. Siva from whom *para satti* emanates is *para siva*m. In this aspect God is not involved in the world of change but is the object of enjoyment of the liberated souls. When *satti* operates on *mayai* and begins the work of creation, it is known as *adi satti* or *tirodhana satti* (the primal grace or grace that hides). Further discussion on grace leads us to the five works of Siva that he does through grace.

The Five Works of Siva (Ainthozil)

The works of liberation Siva does through grace is five fold, namely, creation, preservation, obscuration, destruction and the bestowal of grace. All five are considered grace in the siddhantin's world-view.

I. Creation: The soul in conjunction with the darkness of 'anava' is incapable of knowing itself or God. So first God gives it a body for acting and gaining experience. The body with its evolutes of 'mayai' is acted upon by other evolutes, of 'mayai' in the cosmos and causes attraction and aversion pleasure and pain. Such experiences are needed for the

soul to get enlightened. Hence the evolutes of 'mayai' namely the body and the world are compared to a lamp that gives light at night till at daybreak the sun rises:

As a lamp till day break

Are the evolutes of mayai introducing into 'kanmam' ('Tiru Arulpayan' 30)

When the sun rises, the lamp becomes useless. Similarly at the bestowal of grace the evolutes of 'mayai' become useless. But till then the soul is led in the path of enlightenment by grace through the body and the created world.

2) *Preservation*: It is the work of grace that maintains the body and the worlds giving sufficient opportunities for the soul to act and gain experience.

3) *Obscuration*: At creation 'satti' as indwelling grace begins to abide in the soul. As a person walking on the ground is not aware of the ground he or she walks on, so the soul is not aware of the indwelling grace. The soul is incapable of knowing the true nature of things, its own nature and God who is working to liberate it. This is the work of obscuration. To the siddhantin, it is grace. Since liberation is only through experience, the soul has to experience the nature of the evolutes of 'mayai' and get detached from it. Otherwise the soul may enter into premature 'sanyasa' that is not helpful at all.

4) *Destruction*: The siddhantin considers destruction as an act of grace because the soul passing through many births gets very tired. Then for the benefit of the soul the whole creation is reduced to its causal state and the souls rest in isolation before creation begins again.

5) *The Bestowal of Grace*: This is a direct act of grace on the part of God. There are various states in this and the appearance of a guru is an important one. The influx of grace increases till the person becomes a "jivan mutta (a person who is continuously in the state of God-consciousness).

The Process of Liberation

The soul united to the body goes through life getting excited by attraction and aversion and experiences pleasure and pain. The indwelling grace helps the person to interpret these experiences which are transitory. Aided by grace the soul understands that pleasure, however intense it may be, fades away after some time leaving it quite dry and empty and so does pain too. The first enlightenment that comes to the soul is with regard to 'pasam' the transient nature of the evolutes of 'mayai'. This dawn of wisdom is called 'pasajnanam'.

The indwelling grace continues to interpret the experiences, and the soul understands why the experiences of the evolutes of 'mayai' do not give it any satisfaction but only increase the fever of desire. It gradually dawns on the soul that it is an eternal spiritual being, and that is why transient things can never give it full satisfaction. Such enlightenment with regard to the nature of the soul is called 'pasujnanam'.

At the stage when the soul receives 'pasajnanam' and 'pasujnanam', the evolutes of 'mayai' cease to cause attraction or aversion on the soul. So the first impurity to go is 'pasam' or 'mayai'. Without the hold of 'mayai' the soul begins to do actions without the excitement of desire or repugnance. Therefore it stops accumulating kanmam. The past kanmam is also exhausted or burnt up by grace', which, in individual cases, is given by the guru. Just as the seed when roasted cannot sprout any more, similarly when 'kanmam malam' is removed, the soul is incapable of acquiring 'kanmam.' The anava malam does not go that easily. For this Siva comes as guru and imparts what is called 'guru arul' (the grace imparted by the guru.) It is a sudden influx of grace that opens a person's eye and makes him or her realize that she or he is not the one who is the agent.....

A ripe fruit falls naturally from the tree. Similarly each 'malam' is allowed to ripen and drop from the soul by grace. This makes renunciation a stage that is reached by

a slow process of maturing and not a state of deprivation. For a siddhantin renunciation is not a conscious act of detachment but rather a growing into the state of non-attachment as one grows in the knowledge of one's own identity. It is brought about by grace.

Divinization

The removal of impurities alone does not lead to 'mutti' which is something positive. After the purification there is another influx of grace (tiru arul) which can be either sudden or a gradual inundation of the soul by grace. When this happens the soul is divinized and becomes like Siva. As the hold of grace increases, the soul begins to experience its oneness with God, till in the state of 'turiathetham' (fifth state of consciousness or super-consciousness) it is established in a continuous conscious enjoyment of its advaitic union with Siva. For the siddhantin, the advaitic union is one in which the individual soul remains but it is conscious of its inseparable union with Siva and not of its individuality. One who has attained this state while still alive is called a 'jivan mutta' and after death the same person becomes a 'para mutta'. The removal of impurities and the influx of grace brought about by the guru are illustrated in the 'Sivajnana Siddhiar' as follows:

Just as king's son, living among hunters and not knowing his father the king, or himself as the prince, is encountered by the king who claims him from the hunters and with pride makes him like himself and nurtures him.

Even so the soul, caught up in the whirlpool of the five senses, subject to suffering, not knowing itself or God, is encountered by God as the grace-imparting guru, who removes the soul from the tyranny of the senses, makes it like himself and keeps it at his lotus feet.

(*'Sivajnan Siddhiar' subakkam VIII. 1*)

Grace Symbolised as Woman:

Grace is visualised as a woman, in fact as a virgin-mother. She is virgin because she is a pure emanation from Siva.

She is mother because as the indweller she makes the transcendent divinity immanent. It is she who nurtures, enlightens and finally brings about the union of the soul with Siva as a mother brings her daughter to be united with her husband.

....as the source of the five works
for the removal of the impurities of all in the world
she enjoys the dance of Siva in 'Chit-akas'
This mother's lotus feet I keep on my forehead.
(Sivapragasam, 2)

What gives bliss is not union with grace but union with Siva. When two women meet in love there is not much joy. But when a woman and a man unite in love there is great joy. The siddhantins view the soul as feminine and say that the soul and grace both being feminine, in their union there is no bliss. But the function of grace is to bring about the union of the soul with its 'pati' (Lord) and thus help the soul to enjoy never-ending bliss.

Understanding Rebirth in the Light of Saiva Siddhanta

The Siddhantins firmly believe that it is only God who can come as a guru. No human person can know the maladies of the soul and give it the appropriate medicine except the one, who, through grace indwells in it. Though they do not believe in the incarnation, they believe that Siva appears as a human person when he comes as a guru. John says that Jesus gives those who believe in his name, the power for the new birth (Jn 1: 13). The 'belief' mentioned here is not merely an intellectual assent that Jesus is the Saviour. According to the conciliar document 'Dei Verbum,' through faith the human person freely commits his / her entire self to God (D. V. 5). Applying this meaning of faith to the text, it would mean accepting Jesus as one's guide (guru) and completely surrendering oneself to Him, to be led by Him. The 'power' that brings about the new birth is the Spirit. The Spirit who is the agent of the new birth and makes us the children of God or produces God-likeness in us, may be seen as satti. Jesus is the guru, without of course sacrificing the christian belief in the incarnation.

The bible is very clear in its teaching that the advent of Christ did not take place all of a sudden. There was a long preparation leading to the fulness of time when He was born of a woman. During the time of preparation the transcendent God becomes immanent as the compassionate saviour of an enslaved people. While the bible speaks of the historical preparation for the advent of Christ, Saiva siddhanta speaks of the individual's preparation by grace to meet the guru. In fact the preparation an individual has to go through to have an experiential encounter with Christ is something that we have to develop and in that the siddhantin's doctrine can lend a helping hand.

The Spirit as Satti

In the bible, at the dawn of creation when the earth was formless, void and darkness covered the face of the deep, the Spirit moved over the waters and then creation began (Gen. 1: 1-2). It reminds one of 'adi Satti' moving over 'mayai' making creation evolve. In the book of the Revelation the Spirit is symbolised as the river of the water of life flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. 22: 1). Grace is river descending from heaven, caught up by and allowed to flow from the head of Siva. The Spirit and the Bride (Church) call out to the Bridegroom (Christ), 'come'. It is the Spirit who helps the Church to be united to her bridegroom Christ. According to Saiva siddhanta, it is the function of 'Satti' to bring the bride (the individual soul) to be united to the bridegroom, Siva. 'Satti' is the divine energy, love, wisdom and grace and as such she has much resemblance to the Holy Spirit.

Except in one text in 'Sivajnana Siddhiar' (VIII) where the unredeemed soul is compared to the king's son growing up among hunters, there is no reference to the soul relating to Siva as child to the parent before liberation. Even in this text, the simile is used more to show the ignorance of the soul of its own spiritual identity and what Siva does as guru, than to show its relationship to Siva before liberation. The siddhantins hold that the soul receives God-likeness only through the infusion of grace after

the removal of the three impurities. It is similar to the Christian idea of new birth.

Contribution to Indian Christian Theology

The concept of liberation is very clear in Saiva Siddhanta. This has its own idea of original sin which is specified as the three impurities. Their impact on the soul is explained in great detail. Though the terminology is different, yet an understanding of the three 'malams' makes it easier to grasp the reality of original sin than the way in which western theology has explained it for centuries in terms of the biblical story. The exposition of the process of liberation brought about by grace, the encounter of the guru, the infusion of grace can add enrichment to Christian soteriology which is not clear about what people are liberated from. The traditional four 'bondages' from which people are said to be saved, namely, those of satan, sin, death and law are hardly satisfactory when removed from the Greco-Jewish background in which they were developed.

For the siddhantins creation has a purpose. The phenomenal world is purposeful. The reason for every phenomenon in the world is the liberation of the soul. The gratuitous nature of liberation and grace is very explicit. The siddhantins' doctrine of grace and divinisation is a well co-ordinated system.

It is the greatness of India that she could see the Divine as both male and female. Divine providence and liberation are depicted in so many forms of goddesses who are the manifestations and variants of 'satti'. These goddesses are objects of deep love, veneration and worship. Though people do worship Siva, it is 'satti' who is venerated by millions as the mother and compassionate companion while the soul goes on its weary way towards liberation. In Christianity though people realise the importance of the Spirit, yet praying to the Spirit is limited to certain occasions. The tender love that one should have to one's soul's companion and the trust one should feel towards that person is not felt by an average Christian towards the

Spirit, because the Spirit is depicted as some one abstract. Even the Charismatics who invoke the Spirit more often than others do not have much devotion to It or pray to It. It is Jesus who is the object of worship. The reason is obvious. Among the Christians the need for a period of preparation to meet Christ the guru is not taken seriously. Secondly the Spirit is presented in symbols that are so abstract and elusive that they do not catch the attention of the people. The dove image is not understandable and attractive, and the wind image is too impersonal to enter into any relationship with. The Christian people will understand the function of the Spirit much better if She is symbolised as a woman. The devotion to the Spirit will have the place it ought to have in the Church if She is expressed in the image of Virgin Mother. Now the place of the Spirit is actually given to Mary. No wonder she assumes divine proportions in the mind and heart of many people.

Conclusion

It is fitting that the Spirit who brings about the new birth of every person as the child of God, should be depicted as woman, She brings about the unity in the christian community and the christian's union with the Lord. She inspires the right kind of prayer in the innermost heart of the people. Coming from the Risen Lord, She takes us to the Risen Lord. It will be a great contribution of the Indian Church to theology if we could adopt the symbol and understanding of grace in Saiva siddhanta to the Spirit and make our symbol of the Trinity a balanced one.

Jegamatha Ashram,

Corona Mary, O. S. M.

Tiruchirapalli-620 004.

Book Review

Quest for an Indian Church. An Exploration of the Possibilities Opened up by Vatican II, ed. Kurien Kunnumparam S. J. & Lorenzo Fernando, Anand, Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1993 xi, 215 pp.

The book consists of eight papers written on the occasion of a seminar, held at Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, in November 1990, to mark the completion of twenty five years after Vatican II. According to the Barthian principle that one should preach with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other the authors try to bring the teachings of the Council in alignment with the contemporary Indian concerns. Kurien Kunnumparam discusses the major shifts in emphasis in ecclesiology introduced by Vatican II, from institution to mystery, from papal monarchy to episcopal collegiality, from Hierarchy to the People, and the like. Similarly Jacob Kavunkal focusses attention on a similar shift of emphasis in the scope of mission work, from mere statistics to a wider spirit of evangelization such as working for a just society. The focus of Fr. George V. Lobo's article is that the role of the Church in the economic, social and political fields, such as providing enlightenment and spiritual energy for those temporal tasks is integral to the mission of the Church.

Francis X. D'sa, has a thought-provoking article on an Indian Theology of Religion, criticizing the present Western models and presenting in their place his own paradigm of the Cosmic Purusha, in whose body the different religions appear as "sense-organs of the Ultimate". So each religious tradition will have to discover its identity and role by finding out what specific contribution it is capable of making for the welfare of all; and how that contribution complements other religions. So in this context the function of mission would be only "ensuring the unity of the whole in the whole in the diversity of parts. "(p. 90).

Several papers in the book are surveys of the particular fields. Paul Puthenangady surveys the implications of the vatican document "Sacrosanctum Concilium" on the liturgy, Kuncheria Pathil examines the consequences of the Vatican declaration on the equality of Oriental Churches with the Latins in rights and obligations with respect to preaching the Gospel, and Fr. Lorenzo Fernando examines the new trends promoted by Vatican II in the field of catechetics. Vatican II did not make much of a contribution to the theology of women. But the little it had to say Pearl Drego collects in the paper on "The Place and Role of Women in Church and Society" and views the great progress made in the twenty five years after the Council.

This book is very useful in highlighting the continuing importance and ongoing impact, of the council in theological thinking. One problem may be that there are no responses to these papers. Some of them raise very controversial issues which need more critical examination. Does Vatican II recognize all the religions of the world as equally valid ways of salvation? Is the task of mission solely to establish social justice and has the kerygma no more place in it? Are all religions equal and organically interdependent as the different senses of the body? Attention can be turned to such crucial issues only through responses from other points of view. Without such critical responses the papers may give a wrong impression to laymen and young seminarians that the landscape of faith has radically changed in the Church, though the authors never intended to give such an impression.